2009 Anniversary Celebration! ETC is now 6 years old!

Yay to all the staff and readers who keep our group alive —

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Sumeragi Natsuki's profile

Birthday: August 21st
Zodiac. Leo
Blood type: O
Hometown. Osaka
Debut work: "Hebihime Goten"
(Palace of the Serpent Princess)

装幀／納 由香里

Books by Sumeragi Natsuki

Yama ni Sumu Kami
(The Deity Atop the Mountain)

Shikoutei Ansatsu
(The Emperor and the Assassin)
Based on the screenplay by Chen Kaige and Wang Peigong

Hana no Koe
(The Voice of Flowers)

Rensen: Hana no Koe Yowa
(Fountain of Love: Tales of the Voice of Flowers)

Ryou Sanpaku to Shuku Eidai
(The Butterfly Lovers: Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai)

Ri-chou Angyou-ki
(The Amhaeng-eosa Records of Ri Dynasty)

Peking Reijin-shou
(Memoirs of a Yanjing Performer)

Peking Reijin shou II: Joji-jou
(Memoirs of a Yanjing Performer II: Female Side)

Kido no Kishi no Moto
(Origin of the Knights Flag)

9784048532242
1920979005204
ISBN4-04-853224-3
C0979 ¥520E
角川書店
定価:本体520円(税別)

Atop a mountain, there lived a deity
with a tiger in his household
A fair maiden ventured alone
to see the deity of the mountain

The head of a village plagued
by a man-eating tiger offers his
daughter Hyeon-na in marriage
to any man who successfully
disposes of the tiger.
Dismayed at being treated
as a trophy, Hyeon-na sets
out alone to the mountain
where the tiger lives.

Also includes "Etsujinka",
"Ryakudatsu Sareta Musume",
"Toukasen", and "Seirou Nyonin-koku"

Yama ni Sumu Kami

by Sumeragi Natsuki

山に住む神
Yama ni Sumu Kami
Sumeragi Natsuki

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Etsujinka
(Song of the Yue Maiden)

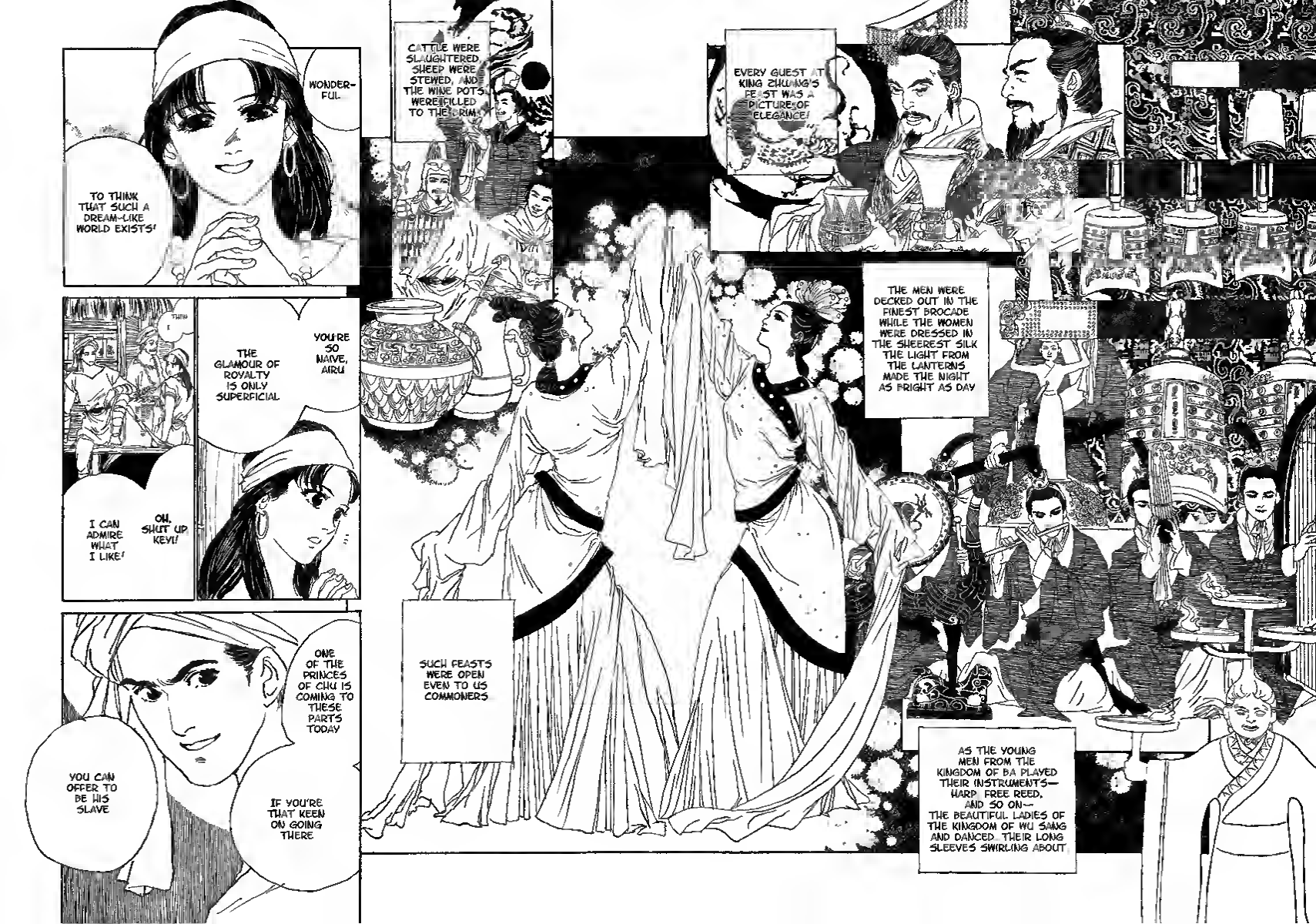
THE KINGDOM OF YUE, CHINA, SOME YEARS B.C.
YOU KNOW
IN THE PAST, I ATTENDED A BANQUET HELD AT THE ROYAL COURT OF THE KINGDOM OF CHU
AS A YOUNG MAN I SERVED THE STEWARD OF THE PALACE OF KUAIJI, OUR CAPITAL CITY
I ACCOMPANIED HIS EXCELLENCY WHEN HE WENT TO VISIT CHU IN ORDER TO OFFER THE SERVICES OF THE PEOPLE OF YUE.

IT WOULD MAKE ALL OF YUE SEEM DRAB IN COMPARISON

IF I WERE TO DESCRIBE THE BEAUTY AND GRANDEUR OF CHU'S CAPITAL CITY,

BEING AN IMMENSE AND POWERFUL NATION, CHU RECEIVES MANY GREAT MEN FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES WHO COME TO PAY THEIR RESPECTS

THE ROYAL COURT IS FULL OF THE GIFTS THESE MEN BRING— BEAUTIFUL WOMAN AND RARE TREASURES OF EVERY KIND


WONDERFUL
TO THINK THAT SUCH A DREAM-LIKE WORLD EXISTS!
CATTLE WERE SLAUGHTERED, SHEEP WERE STEWED, AND THE WINE POTS WERE FILLED TO THE RIM.
EVERY GUEST AT KING ZHUANG'S FEAST WAS A PICTURE OF ELEGANCE!
THE MEN WERE DECKED OUT IN THE FINEST BROCADE WHILE THE WOMEN WERE DRESSED IN THE SHEEREST SILK. THE LIGHT FROM THE LANTERNS MADE THE NIGHT AS BRIGHT AS DAY
YOU'RE SO NAIVE, AIRU
THE GLAMOUR OF ROYALTY IS ONLY SUPERFICIAL
I CAN ADMIRE WHAT I LIKE!
OH, SHUT UP KEVI!
SUCH FEASTS WERE OPEN EVEN TO US COMMONERS
AS THE YOUNG MEN FROM THE KINGDOM OF BA PLAYED THEIR INSTRUMENTS— HARP, FREE REED, AND SO ON— THE BEAUTIFUL LADIES OF THE KINGDOM OF WU SANG AND DANCED, THEIR LONG SLEEVES SWIRLING ABOUT
ONE OF THE PRINCES OF CHU IS COMING TO THESE PARTS TODAY
IF YOU'RE THAT KEEN ON GOING THERE
YOU CAN OFFER TO BE HIS SLAVE

A CHU PRINCE IS COMING?
WAIT, WHAT DID YOU SAY?
WHY YOU! YOU JUST CAN'T RESIST TEAS—
HA HA HA!
REALLY?
YES
THAT'S WHY THE VILLAGE HEAD WANTS A ROWER FROM EVERY SAILING FAMILY
THE PRINCE IS GOING TO STOP HERE FOR A CRUISE DOWN THE RIVER ON HIS WAY BACK FROM VISITING OUR KING
YOU DIDN'T KNOW, AIRU?
I AM NOT SURE I WANT TO
HEY, SHIYI LET'S GO WATCH THE PRINCE WHEN HE TAKES HIS CRUISE!
I WANT TO GO, TOO!
HE DOESN'T HESITATE TO KILL ANYONE WHO RUBS HIM THE WRONG WAY
WELL... I HEAR HE'S A TERRIBLE PERSON
WHY NOT?

REALLY?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
YU-CHEN
HEY!
He does, that?
THE CHU PRINCE IS HERE!
THUD!
EEK!
OW!
SHIV!
IF YOU SPRAINED YOUR FOOT, YOU COULD TRY COOLING IT IN THE LAKE.
I'LL TAKE YOU THERE.
Jiuchen
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE PULLED ME LIKE THAT!
I'M SORRY
DOES YOUR LEG HURT?

DON'T YOU WANT TO SEE THE PRINCE?
COME ON!
AH
LET ME—
SILLY
DON'T BE TACTLESS
TACT-LESS?!
YOU'LL BREAK MY HAND
YOU DON'T NEED TO PULL SO HARD!
OW!
YOU'RE SUCH A WHINER
AND WHOSE FAULT IS THAT?
YOU'RE NOT A GENTLEMAN. I HATE YOU!
BE A GENTLEMAN, HUH?
HOW DO YOU WANT ME TO DO THAT?

HEY,
WHAT—?!
YOU WANT ME TO HOLD YOU THE WAY JIUCHEN HELD SHIYI?
ARU
MARRY ME
EEK!!
GET AWAY FROM ME! I'M SUFFOCATING HERE!
OW, OW
MM?
THERE MUST BE SOME OF OUR OWN PEOPLE THERE— THE ONES IN CHARGE OF THE FEAST
I HAVE TO ADMIT THOUGH THAT'S AN IMPRESSIVE NUMBER OF CARRIAGES AND HORSES
WOW
THAT ENTIRE PROCESSION IS FROM CHU?

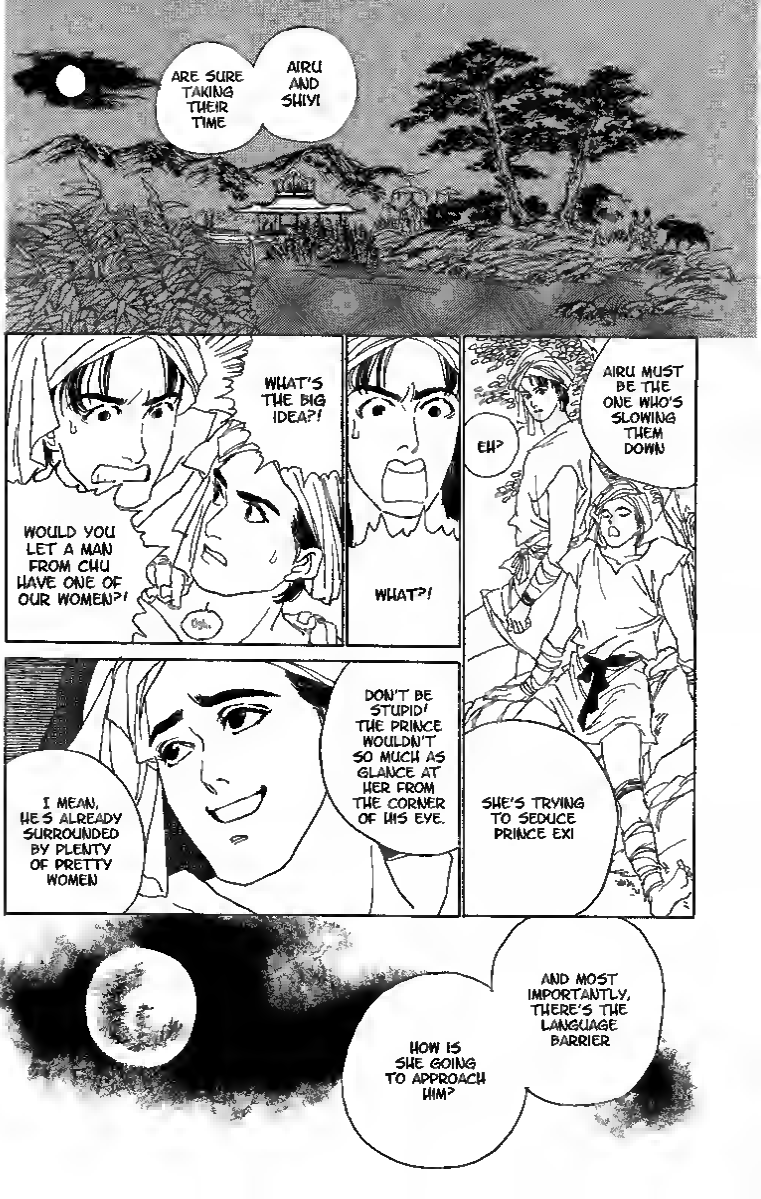
WHICH ONE IS THE PRINCE?
NO COUNTRY WOULD EVEN THINK OF ATTACKING CHU, NOT AFTER SEEING THIS.
WHAT A DISPLAY!

AS EXI, PRINCE OF CHU,
IT IS AN HONOR.
SHH!
HMPH! A PRINCE WHO ENJOYS KILLING PEOPLE MUST HAVE A GREASY LOOK ABOUT HIM.
PRINCE
THE PEOPLE FROM THE NEARBY VILLAGE HAVE COME TO PAY THEIR RESPECTS.

AI-
AIRU?
NOT THE PLEASANT TYPE...
AND BOUND TO BE ARROGANT...
I...
..?
WOULDN'T MIND BEING HIS SLAVE

YOU'RE ACTING WEIRD!
WHY ARE YOU SO RESTLESS? WE'RE ONLY GOING TO BE ROWING
YOU KEEP ASKING THAT!
NO, YOU DON'T LOOK FUNNY
SHIYI,
DO I LOOK FUNNY?
WELL, THERE'S A POSSIBILITY OF CATCHING THE PRINCE'S EYE,
ISN'T THERE?
AIRU...
PRINCE EXI LOOKS SO CHARMING
WEARING THAT EXOTIC HEADPIECE AND THOSE ELEGANT ROBES WITH SLEEVES THIS LONG!
HOW I WISH TO BE NEAR HIM AND SERVE HIM

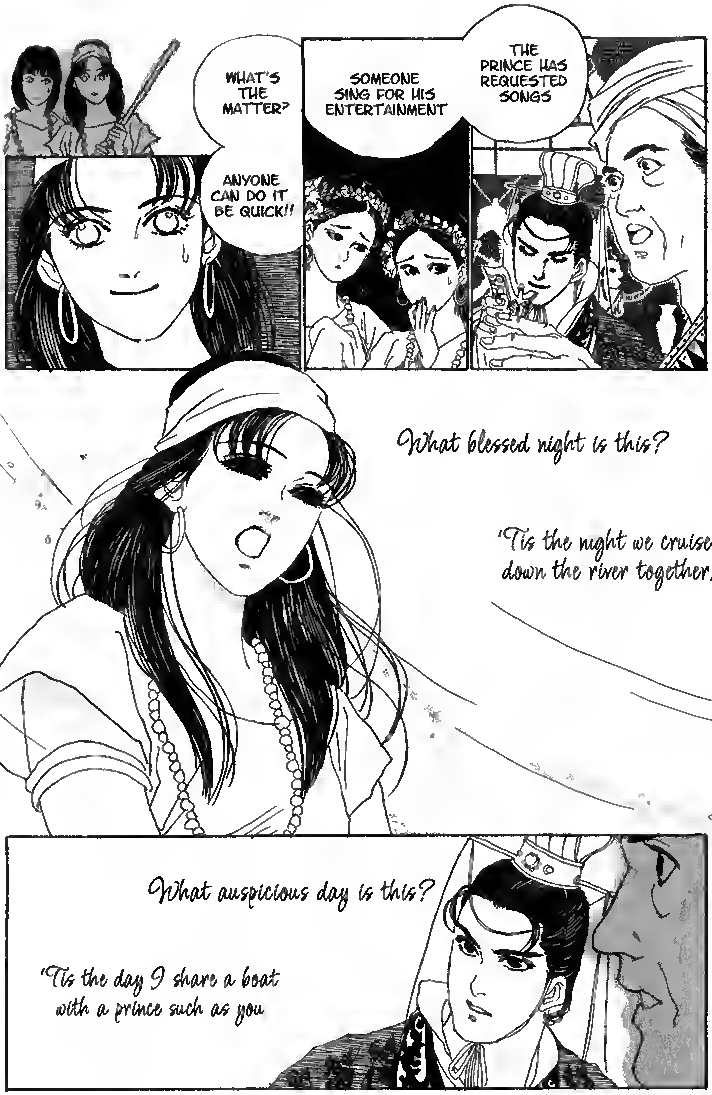
I-I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THIS VILLAGE!
OH, YES YOU ALREADY HAVE JIUCHEN
AND YOU HAVE KEYI!
HE MAY BE BLUNT, BUT HE'S A GOOD MAN.
HE ALWAYS HAS HIS EYES ON YOU
NO MATTER HOW MANY GIRLS ARE IN A GROUP, YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE HE SEES
SO...
YOU'RE SAYING I SHOULD LOOK BACK AT HIM?
I DON'T HATE HIM,
BUT I HAVE NO REASON TO LOVE HIM


AIRU AND SHIYI ARE SURE TAKING THEIR TIME
WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?!
WOULD YOU LET A MAN FROM CHU HAVE ONE OF OUR WOMEN?!
WHAT?!
EH?
AIRU MUST BE THE ONE WHO'S SLOWING THEM DOWN
SHE'S TRYING TO SEDUCE PRINCE EXI
DON'T BE STUPID! THE PRINCE WOULDN'T SO MUCH AS GLANCE AT HER FROM THE CORNER OF HIS EYE.
I MEAN, HE'S ALREADY SURROUNDED BY PLENTY OF PRETTY WOMEN
HOW IS SHE GOING TO APPROACH HIM?
AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THERE'S THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

I HEARD THE PEOPLE OF CHU PREFER SLENDER WOMEN,
BUT YUE BEAUTIES ARE NOT ALL THAT BAD,
DON'T YOU THINK, PRINCE?

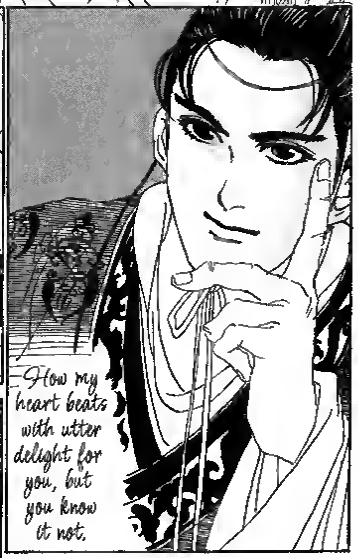
HA HA HA BE MY GUEST
WHY, YES, STEWARD
YOU'RE WELCOME TO TAKE AS MANY WOMEN AS YOU WANT
ONE OF THESE DAYS, I MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO GATHER UP THESE FIRST-RATE BEAUTIES AND TAKE THEM BACK WITH ME TO CHU.
ABOUT CATCHING THE EYE OF A NOBLEMAN?
WHAT'S SO BAD...
IS HE GOING TO TAKE THEM TO CHU?
THOSE POOR SOULS
I'm glad I'm not a beauty
OH, PRINCE, CAN'T YOU LOOK THIS WAY?

!!
IT'S NO USE, AIRU
HEY...
AIRU IS WATCHING THE PRINCE AND GETTING ALL WORKED UP
Hmph...
LET HER DO WHAT SHE WANTS
HE CAN'T SEE YOU IN THE DARK
STEWARD
WHILE I DO ENJOY SEEING THESE BEAUTIFUL WOMEN DANCE, I'D VERY MUCH LIKE TO HEAR YOUR FOLK SONGS.
F-FOLK SONGS?


WHAT'S THE MATTER?
ANYONE CAN DO IT BE QUICK!!
SOMEONE SING FOR HIS ENTERTAINMENT
THE PRINCE HAS REQUESTED SONGS
What blessed night is this?
'Tis the night we cruise down the river together.
What auspicious day is this?
'Tis the day I share a boat with a prince such as you

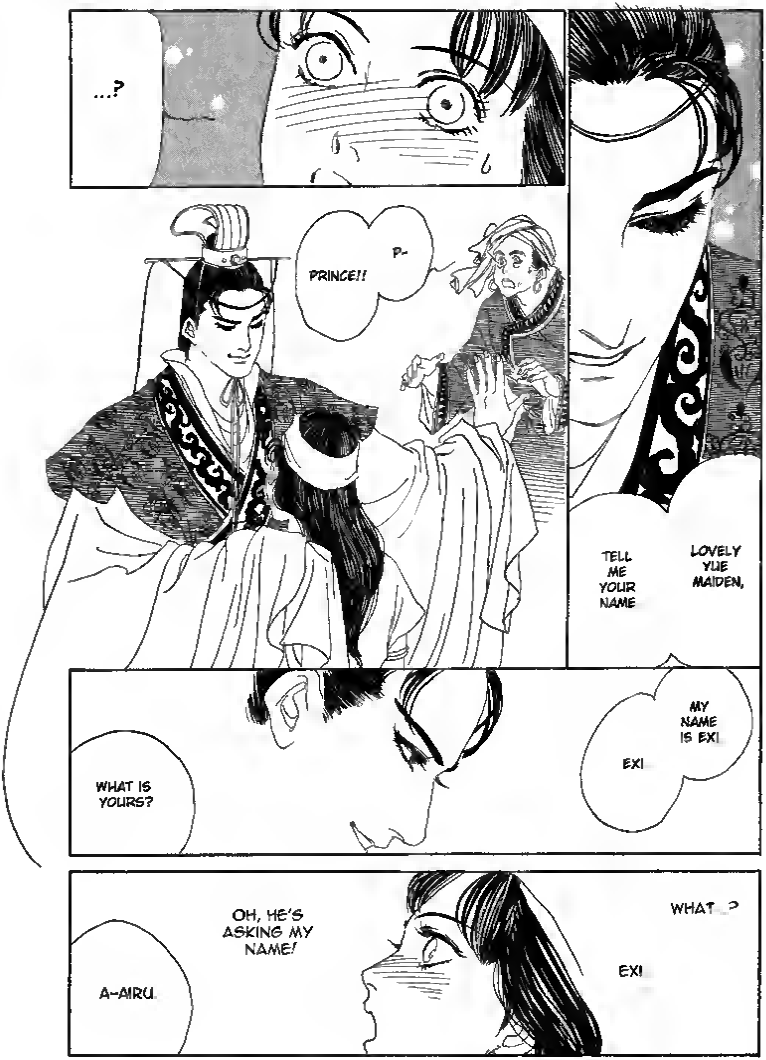
I am but a humble creature unworthy of you, my prince.
But still my heart fills with longing to make your acquaintance,
like a mountain that yearns for trees, like a tree that needs branches

ER, I BELIEVE IT'S IMPROMPTU
I DON'T UNDERSTAND A WORD, BUT SHE HAS A BEAUTIFUL VOICE.
SHE'S SINGING OF HER JOY AT BEING ON THE SAME BOAT AS YOU
WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE SONG?


How my heart beats with utter delight for you, but you know it not.

I SEE

PRINCE?


...?
P-
PRINCE!!
LOVELY YUE MAIDEN,
TELL ME YOUR NAME
EXI
MY NAME IS EXI
WHAT IS YOURS?
WHAT...?
EXI
OH, HE'S ASKING MY NAME!
A-AIRU

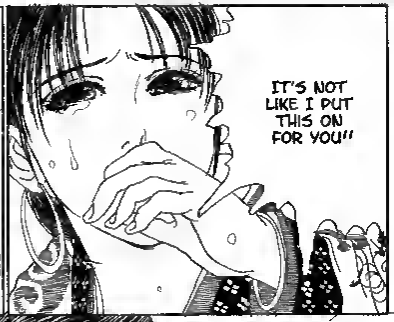
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
OBVIOUSLY I'M GOING TO DRAG THAT STUPID AIRU BACK HERE!
K-KEY!!
SPLASH
LET IT GO FOR NOW, ALL RIGHT?
YOU CAN CONFRONT AIRU TOMORROW.
ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND? YOU'LL BE DEALING WITH A CHU PRINCE!
THAT'S WHAT I'M WORRIED ABOUT!

AIRU!
HEY, AIRU!
WHAT WERE YOU UP TO...
OH, KEY!
WELL?
DOES THIS LOOK GOOD ON ME?
LAST NI—?
!!
WH-
THE PRINCE GAVE IT TO ME. HE SAID IF I'M GOING TO CHU, I SHOULD WEAR CHU CLOTHES
WHY ARE YOU WEARING THAT?
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
WHO'S GOING TO CHU?!

I'LL BE SERVING THE PRINCE
COME HERE!
WHAT? LET GO OF ME!
EEK!
HAVE A GOOD LOOK AT YOUR REFLECTION IN THE WATER!
THAT GOOFY GRIN ON YOUR FACE, AND THAT TRAILING ROBE...
THOSE THINGS DON'T SUIT YOU ONE BIT!!
EEK!!

HEY,
WAKE UP—
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
...

I'M SORRY, AIRU
I WENT TOO FAR


IT'S NOT LIKE I PUT THIS ON FOR YOU!!

LET GO OF ME!
THIS IS MY ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME CHANCE TO FIND HAPPINESS!

SO BECOMING HIS WIFE WILL MAKE YOU HAPPY?
CAN'T YOU FIND HAPPINESS HERE IN THE VILLAGE?
THE PRINCE HAS MANY CONCUBINES. HE PROBABLY WON'T HAVE ANY QUALMS ABOUT ABANDONING YOU.
NOTHING CAN COMPARE TO BECOMING THE PRINCE'S WIFE!
IF HE DIES BEFORE HIS TIME, THEY MIGHT LEAVE YOU TO DIE IN A DARK DARK TOMB WHILE YOU'RE STILL YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL
YOU CALL THAT HAPPINESS?!
I'D RATHER BE ABANDONED OR KILLED
THAN BECOME YOUR WIFE!!

FINE
KEYI
I'M SORRY
KEYI,
THE PRINCE IS LEAVING
SO IS AIRU

I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT HER
NO USE TELLING YOU THAT, HUH?
THAT'S THE SPIRIT!
HAVING AN UNATTRACTIVE SHREW LIKE AIRU AS YOUR WIFE WOULD BE ROUGH ON YOU ANYWAY
KEY!
YOU DON'T SEEM TO BE IN THE MOOD TO SEE HER OFF.
MM?
YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO CRITICIZE HER!!
?
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!

MY PARENTS ARE OLD, AND MY BROTHERS ARE STILL VERY YOUNG
IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO ME,
PLEASE LOOK AFTER THEM
WHY THE LONG FACE?
ARE YOU NERVOUS ABOUT LEAVING YOUR VILLAGE?
DON'T BE
I'M HERE WITH YOU.
STRANGE
MY DREAM HAS COME TRUE BUT

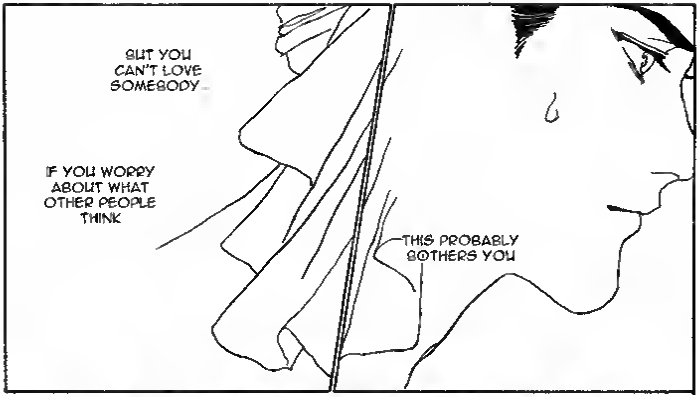
WHAT'S ALL THIS COMMOTION?
YOUR HIGHNESS!
THIS FELLOW SUDDENLY BARGED IN HERE AND DEMANDED THAT WE RETURN LADY AIRU!
HEY, YOU!
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!
WHY DO I FEEL SO RESTLESS, SO SAD?
AIRU,
KEYI!!
COME BACK!
LET'S GO BACK TO THE VILLAGE TOGETHER!

AIRU, IS HE YOUR LOVER? A RECKLESS ONE, I MUST SAY.
RETURN HER?
WHAT IS HE SAYING?
IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT!
HE'S AN EYESORE.
KNOCK HIM OUT AND BE RID OF HIM.
!
YOUR HIGHNESS!!

AIRU IS PROBABLY JUST ANOTHER WOMAN TO YOU,
BUT TO ME, SHE IS THE WOMAN!!
I DON'T
I DIDN'T THINK IT THROUGH,
BUT HEY, I WENT AHEAD AND DID IT ANYWAY
ARE YOU A FOOL?
DO YOU THINK YOU'LL GET AWAY WITH THIS?
WELL, IF YOU INSIST, I CAN GIVE HER BACK TO YOU,
BUT...
HMPH.
INSO-LENCE
HIS HIGHNESS SAYS HE WILL GIVE HER BACK IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR LEGS

YOU'RE GIVING UP YOUR OWN TWO LEGS FOR A WOMAN?!
I HAVE NEVER KNOWN A BIGGER FOOL!
HA HA HA HA!
...
YOU WILL.
GIVE HER BACK?
KEYI, NO!!
HOW ARE YOU GOING TO SUPPORT YOUR PARENTS WITHOUT YOUR LEGS?!
VERY WELL.
I'LL CUT THEM OFF FOR YOU.
A MOMENT, PLEASE!

I WANT TO AT LEAST BE ABLE TO HAUL THINGS WITH A ROPE
WITHOUT MY LEGS, I WON'T BE ABLE TO SUPPORT MY ELDERLY PARENTS
DREADING THE LOSS OF YOUR LEGS?
HE WANTS TO TRADE HIS ARM FOR HIS LEGS
KEVI
AIRU,
I MADE YOU HATE ME AGAIN


BUT YOU CAN'T LOVE SOMEBODY...
IF YOU WORRY ABOUT WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK
THIS PROBABLY BOTHERS YOU

AND YET YOU'RE WILLING TO LOSE AN ARM FOR ME!
I'M NOT A WOMAN WHO DESERVES YOUR SACRIFICE!
WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU, KEYI?!

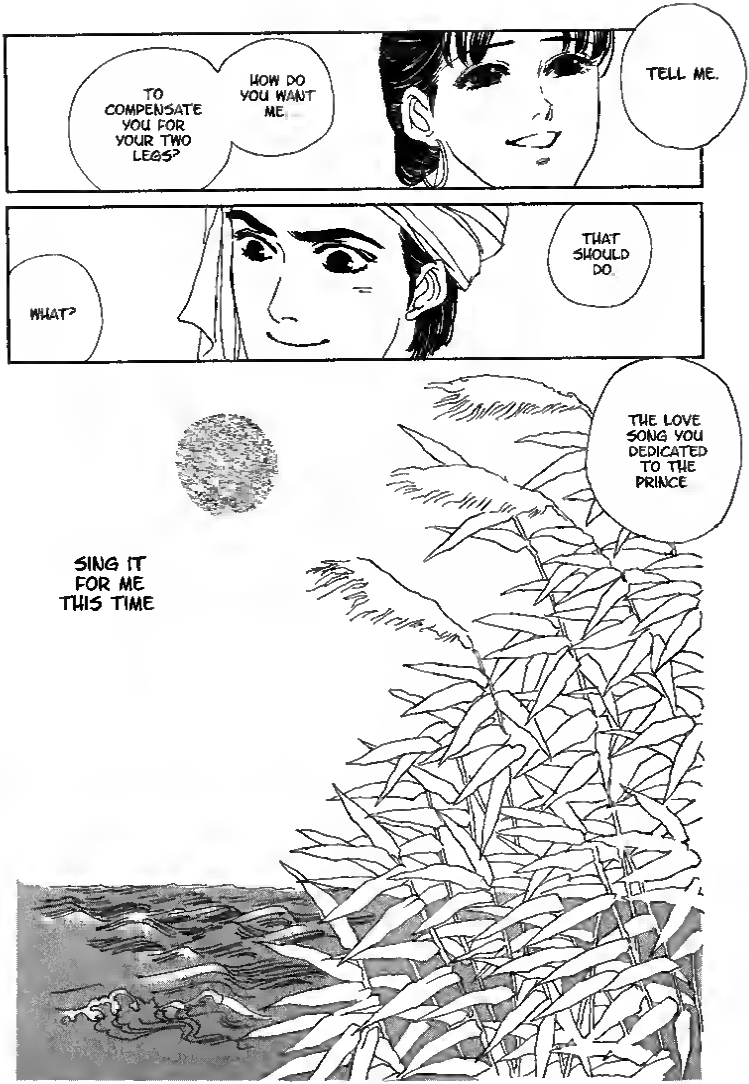
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO REPAY YOU?!

!!
Hyaii
FLICK

RAISE
WOOSH
AIRU.

HE'S A FINE MAN.
I CAN'T LOVE YOU AS MUCH AS HE CAN.

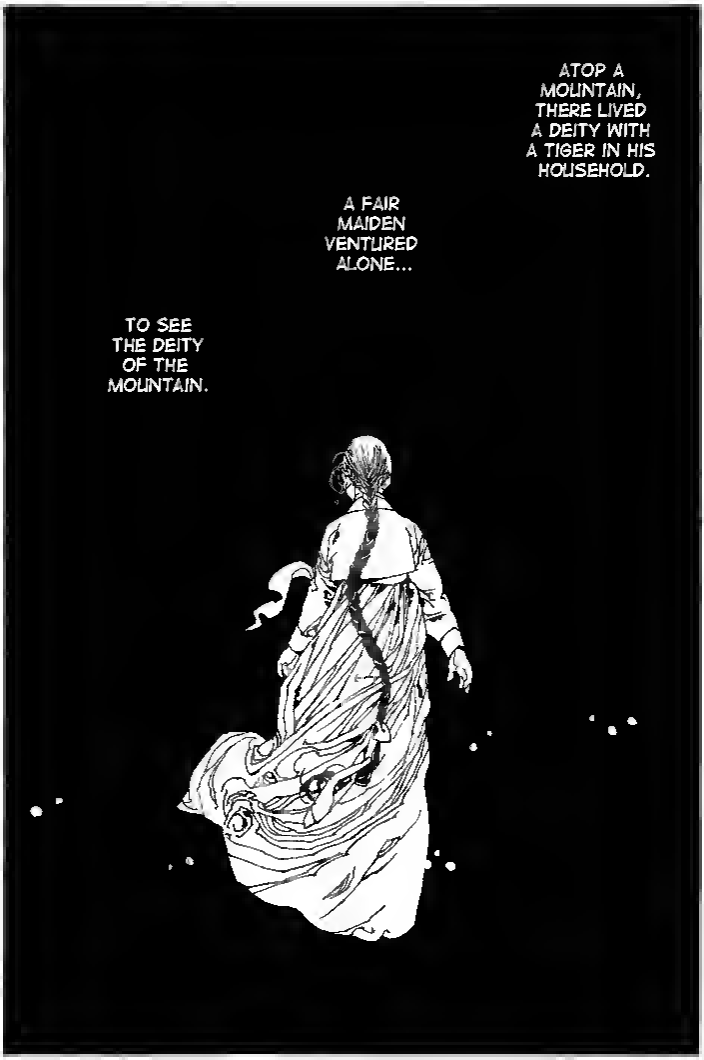
UGH!!
WHOSE FAULT DO YOU THINK IT IS?!
HE'S GONE
HA HA...
YOU MADE ME...
WHY ARE YOU ALWAYS SO RECKLESS?!
YOU RUINED MY DREAM JUST LIKE THAT!
WORRY HALF TO DEATH!


TELL ME.
HOW DO YOU WANT ME...
TO COMPENSATE YOU FOR YOUR TWO LEGS?
THAT SHOULD DO.
WHAT?
THE LOVE SONG YOU DEDICATED TO THE PRINCE
SING IT FOR ME THIS TIME

End of "Etsujinka"

Yama ni Sumu Kami
(The Deity Atop a Mountain)

Note: The author uses Korean terms throughout this tale inspired by Korean folklore.


ATOP A MOUNTAIN, THERE LIVED A DEITY WITH A TIGER IN HIS HOUSEHOLD.
A FAIR MAIDEN VENTURED ALONE...
TO SEE THE DEITY OF THE MOUNTAIN.

SPLOSH...
PHEW...
SNAP

...!!
RUSTLE RUSTLE
...
AJEOSSI*!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
!!
*AJEOSSI = TERM FOR AN OLDER MALE

IT'S ALL RIGHT! THE TIGER WON'T DO ANYTHING WHILE I'M AROUND
HUG
EEK!! THERE'S A TIGER!!
HEY HELLO?
IT WON'T? ARE YOU A SUN-IN*?
OH... SO THE MAN-EATING TIGER KILLED YOU, TOO?
OH, DEAR MY FATHER WILL BE DISTRESSED WHEN HE HEARS ABOUT IT
BUT REALLY! YOU LOOK NO DIFFERENT FROM A LIVING PERSON
GASP
IT'S JUST THAT I CAN'T RETURN TO THE HUMAN WORLD BECAUSE I WAS KILLED BY THE TIGER I STAY HERE AND SERVE SANSIN-NIM**
NO, OF COURSE NOT! MY NAME IS KAPPOL.

*SUN-IN = ONE LIVING IN THE REALM OF THE GODS
**SANSIN = THE MOUNTAIN DEITY NIM = RESPECTFUL TERM OF ADDRESS

NO, YOU CAN'T
...
WAS I? I CAN'T GO BACK TO THE HUMAN WORLD, CAN I?
EH?
COULD IT BE... THAT I WAS KILLED BY THE TIGER, TOO?
HEY, DON'T CRY.
LIVING IN THE MOUNTAINS ISN'T ALL THAT BAD.
YOU KNOW ME?
EVERYONE DOES!
YOU'RE THE BEAUTIFUL YOUNGEST DAUGHTER OF THE VILLAGE HEAD WHO'S TO BE GIVEN IN MARRIAGE TO THE MAN WHO DISPOSES OF THE TIGER
ANYWAY, IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT, HYEON-NA.
TO BEGIN WITH, A GIRL SHOULDN'T TRAVEL INTO THE MOUNTAINS ALONE.

YOU'LL BE MARRIED TO A TIGER-SLAYING HERO!
YOU'RE NOT HAPPY?
YES
MY FATHER DECIDED THAT
A HERO DOESN'T NECESSARILY MAKE A GOOD HUSBAND
HE MIGHT BE A RUFFIAN OR A MAN WHO KEEPS MANY CONCUBINES
OR AN OLD MAN
PROBABLY
OR A WANDERING ENTERTAINER, OR A SNAKE CATCHER
YES
OR A DESTITUTE GINSENG HUNTER
YOU SEE! I FEEL LIKE A TROPHY FOR SOME STRANGE MAN!
WHEN MY SISTERS WERE TO BE MARRIED, MY FATHER TOOK CARE TO INVESTIGATE THEIR FUTURE HUSBANDS BACKGROUNDS TO MAKE SURE THEY WOULD BE HAPPY!
I CAME HERE IN PERSON TO BEG SANSIN-NIM
TO STOP THE MAN-EATING TIGER
WHAT
AM I SUPPOSED TO DO NOW?

HOW CAN I MEET HIM?
HAVE YOU EVER MET SANSIN-NIM?
HUH?
BUT SANSIN-NIM GAVE ME A PURPOSE
I-I-LIKE I SAID, DON'T WORRY!
I WAS WORRIED AT FIRST, TOO,
SANSIN-NIM!
SANSIN-NIM!
HE'LL TURN UP IF I CALL HIM
IT DOESN'T WORK FOR NORMAL PEOPLE THOUGH
NOW THAT I'M DEAD I CAN DO IT, CAN'T I?
HUH?!

Sansin-nim!
THERE'S NO SIGN OF HIM
TH-THAT'S BECAUSE YOU JUST DIED!
MY WORD YOU WERE LOUD
WHY HAVE YOU CALLED ME, KAIDOL?
WOW!
...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE HUMAN MAIDEN?
ARE YOU NOT THE VILLAGE HEAD'S DAUGHTER?
?!
WHO TOLD YOU THAT?
IT WAS KAPDOL.
YES, I AM, SANSIN-NIM MY NAME IS HYEON-NA.
GLARE
I AM NO LONGER HUMAN HOWEVER
I WAS KILLED BY THE MAN-EATING TIGER THAT ROAMS THIS MOUNTAIN
SANSIN-NIM
MY TIES TO THE HUMAN WORLD HAVE BEEN SEVERED BEFORE I COULD GET MARRIED
PERHAPS I DESERVED IT FOR BEING RASH

PLEASE LET THERE BE NO MORE CHILDREN WHO FAIL IN THEIR FILIAL DUTY BY PRECEDING THEIR PARENTS IN DEATH
I IMPLORE YOU
PLEASE, IF YOU HAVE ANY PITY FOR MY FATE
WOULD YOU QUELL THE MALEVOLENT NATURE OF THE MAN-EATING TIGER?
IF YOU CRY
I...
WAAAAH!
FATHER! MOTHER!
HYEON-NA PLEASE STOP CRYING
KAPDOL...
ROAR

BUT STILL...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID OF HIM
IT'S ALL RIGHT HYEON-NA
!!
I... I KNOW
NO NEED
WHEN YOU'RE DEAD, THERE'S NO
NO NEED TO BE AFRAID
AJEOSSI,
THIS GIRL IS A DEAR FRIEND OF MINE!
SO
FRIEND?
LIKE WE ONCE WERE?
...

YES
ARE YOU TELLING ME NOT TO EAT HER?
...?
HAVE NO FEAR AT THE MOMENT I AM NOT SO HUNGRY
THAT I MUST EAT HER
HYEON-NA,
AJEOSSI SAYS HE WANTS TO BE YOUR FRIEND
AMAZING KAPOOL
YOU UNDERSTAND THE TIGER'S SPEECH
HAS IT BEEN SO SINCE THE TIME YOU WERE STILL ALIVE?
NO I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND HIM WHILE I WAS ALIVE.

A DISTANT ANCESTOR OF MINE WAS KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT HERBS. ONE DAY IN THE MOUNTAINS, HE HELPED A TIGER THAT SUFFERED FROM A STOMACH AILMENT.
LINKED BY THAT, THEY SWORE BROTHERHOOD
EVER SINCE THEN, THE TIGERS OF THESE MOUNTAINS ARE PLEDGED NOT TO ATTACK ANY OF OUR BLOOD
BOND?
TH-THAT'S BECAUSE...
THERE'S A DEEP BOND BETWEEN THE TIGER AND ME.
WHY IS IT THAT I CAN'T SPEAK TO HIM?
V-YES
BUT THE TIGER STILL KILLED YOU?
I SUPPOSE YOU CAN'T CONVEY HUMAN REASON TO BEASTS

WILL YOU STAY BY ME?
KAPDOL
YES?
YES
PHEW
I'M GLAD

HOWEVER, WHEN SHE FINDS OUT YOU HAVE BEEN LYING TO HER, SHE WILL BE HURT AND SAD
PERHAPS SHE JUST MIGHT FALL IN LOVE WITH YOU IF YOU TREAT HER KINDLY.
WELL, I SUPPOSE THE YOUNG MAIDEN IS FEELING INSECURE AND TEARFUL, HAVING BEEN SEPARATED FROM HER PARENTS.
I LOVE HER I WANT HER TO STAY WITH ME
IF SHE STAYS LONG ENOUGH,
SHE MIGHT EVEN FALL IN LOVE WITH ME.
WHY DID YOU LIE AND TELL HER SHE IS DEAD?
SHE WILL FIND OUT EVENTUALLY EVEN IF I DON'T TELL HER. IF YOU ARE INTENT ON TRICKING HER AND ARE PREPARED FOR THE CONSEQUENCES...
WELL, KAPDOL, I WILL HOLD MY TONGUE!
SANSIN-NIM, ARE YOU GOING TO TELL HYEON-NA THE TRUTH?

NOW TIGER, I AM NOT TELLING YOU THIS FOR THE SAKE OF THE HUMANS
BUT OUT OF CONCERN FOR YOUR WELL-BEING
IF YOU DO NOT STOP ATTACKING THEM, YOU WILL BE THE OBJECT OF THEIR ENMITY AND BE IN DANGER.
SANSIN, I DO NOT FEAR HUMANS
HOW I LIVE, HOW I DIE I SHALL ABIDE BY HEAVEN'S WILL..
SIGH
BOTH OF YOU ARE BEYOND ME
CHEEP CHEEP

WOULDN'T YOU FEEL SAD IF HUMANS KILLED YOUR CHILDREN OR PARENTS?
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND TIGER-SS!?
SO YOU REALLY OUGHT NOT TO EAT HUMANS
CHILD, I MUST EAT TO SURVIVE
I TAKE WHATEVER APPEARS BEFORE ME WHEN I AM HUNGRY.
BE IT A RABBIT, A WATER DEER, OR A HUMAN
NOTHING WILL CHANGE THE FACT THAT THEY ARE GAME BESTOWED BY HEAVEN.
KAI'DOL.
WHAT DID HE SAY?
HE SAID HE WON'T EAT ANY MORE HUMANS

I'M GLAD!!
NOW MY FATHER AND EVERYONE IN THE VILLAGE WILL BE ABLE TO LIVE IN PEACE!
REALLY?
HAVE NO FEAR I REASONED WITH HIM YESTERDAY
I SAID IF HE DASHES YOUR HOPES, HE WILL HAVE TO ANSWER TO ME
KAPDOL, I AM SO GRATEFUL
THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING

I MEAN IT
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS, AJEOSSI!
I DO NOT KNOW WHEN I WILL RETURN. IT IS TO BE LONG-TERM.
HOWEVER, I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PROVE IT TO YOU. I AM GOING TO TAEBAEKSAN ON AN ERRAND FOR SANSIN.
...
LISTEN, KAPDOL.
THE NEXT TIME YOU PUT WORDS IN MY MOUTH WHEN YOU TALK TO THAT GIRL,
I WILL EAT HER.
I KNOW THAT WILL CAUSE YOU GRIEF.
ONCE THE MAN-EATING TIGER IS GONE, THAT GIRL'S TRUST IN YOU WILL GROW STILL DEEPER.
BUT...
KAPDOL.
DO YOU NOT REMEMBER? YOU EXPERIENCED THAT KIND OF PAIN RIGHT BEFORE YOUR DEATH.
I WANTED HYEON-NA TO SMILE.
BUT WHY DOES IT HURT TO SEE HER DO SO?
TELL ME, AJEOSSI.

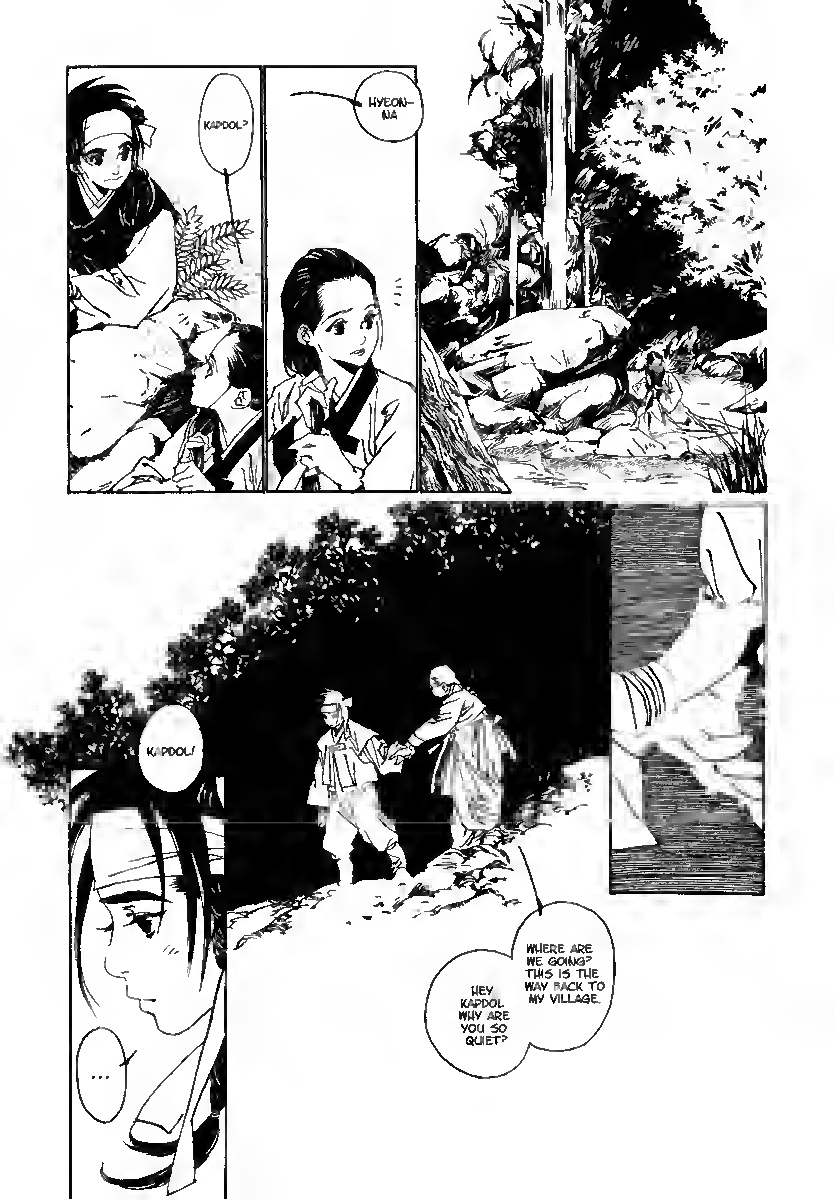
THAT DAY, YOU, A GINSENG HUNTER, ATTEMPTED TO KILL ME
YOU THEN PRODUCED YOUR DAGGER FROM ITS HIDING PLACE, INTENDING TO STAB ME THROUGH THE HEART, DID YOU NOT?
YOU WANTED TO BECOME A TIGER-SLAYER SO YOU COULD MARRY THAT GIRL.
AND PUT ME OFF MY GUARD.
YOU APPROACHED ME AS A FRIEND, THE WAY YOU ALWAYS DID...
BUT YOU MISSED. YOUR DAGGER PIERCED MY EYE INSTEAD.

THE PAIN DROVE ME MAD. I WAS COMPELLED TO KILL YOU.
I STILL REMEMBER THE PAINED EXPRESSION ON YOUR FACE AS YOU LAY ON THE BRINK OF DEATH.
THE PAIN OF LOSING MY EYE WAS NOTHING COMPARED WITH THE PAIN OF YOUR BETRAYAL.

IT WAS NOT FEAR.

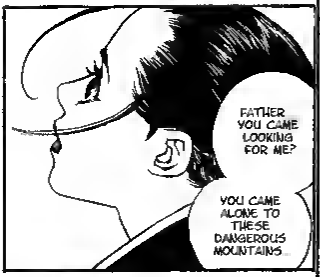
WHAT A JOKE
WE'RE SORRY CHOLJANG-NIM*
SOMEBODY PLEASE SAVE HER!!
THE TIGER WILL KILL HER!
HELP SOMEBODY!
HYEON-NA WAS GONE TO THE MOUNTAINS ALONE!!
*CHOLJANG = VILLAGE HEAD
NOT ONE OF THE YOUNG MEN OF THIS VILLAGE WHO WENT TO THE MOUNTAINS HOPING TO GAIN HYEON-NA'S HAND IN MARRIAGE RETURNED ALIVE
EVEN THE BEST TIGER HUNTER IN THESE PARTS WAS NO MATCH FOR THAT ANIMAL
WE'VE HAD ENOUGH OF PEOPLE DYING FOR HER

FOR HYEON-NA?! IT'S FOR THE VILLAGE!!
AND YET THERE ARE NO OTHERS TO STEP FORWARD
AH HYEON-NA! WHY DID YOU..?
SANG-GONG*
YES MANY LIVES ARE AT RISK
THAT'S WHY I STEELED MYSELF TO OFFER MY DAUGHTER WHOM I LOVE WITH MY LIFE, AS A REWARD
*SANGGONG = VERY RESPECTIVE WAY TO ADDRESS ONE'S HUSBAND
BUT SHE WAS TO MARRY A TIGER-SLAYING HERO!
FORGIVE MY WOMANLY INTERFERENCE.
BUT HYEON-NA WAS DEEPLY HURT
SHE ASKED ME.
DID HER FATHER NOT LOVE HER THAT HE OFFERED HER AS BAIT?


KAPDOL?
HYEON-
NA
...
KAPDOL!
...
HEY KAPDOL WHY ARE YOU SO QUIET?
WHERE ARE WE GOING? THIS IS THE WAY BACK TO MY VILLAGE.

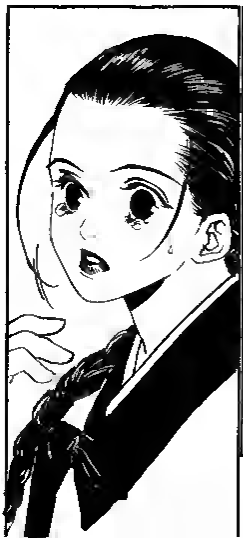
HYEON-NA
FATHER?
HYEON-NA
GO BACK TO YOUR VILLAGE.
EH?
BUT THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE, RIGHT? DIDN'T YOU SAY THOSE WHO ARE KILLED BY THE TIGER ARE SUPPOSED TO SERVE SANSIN-NIM?
...
YES THOSE WHO ARE KILLED

WHAT FOR?
I'M SORRY
HYEON-NA.
..?
I
HYEON-NA?!
HYEON-NA!
YOU'RE SAFE!!


FATHER YOU CAME LOOKING FOR ME?
YOU CAME ALONE TO THESE DANGEROUS MOUNTAINS...

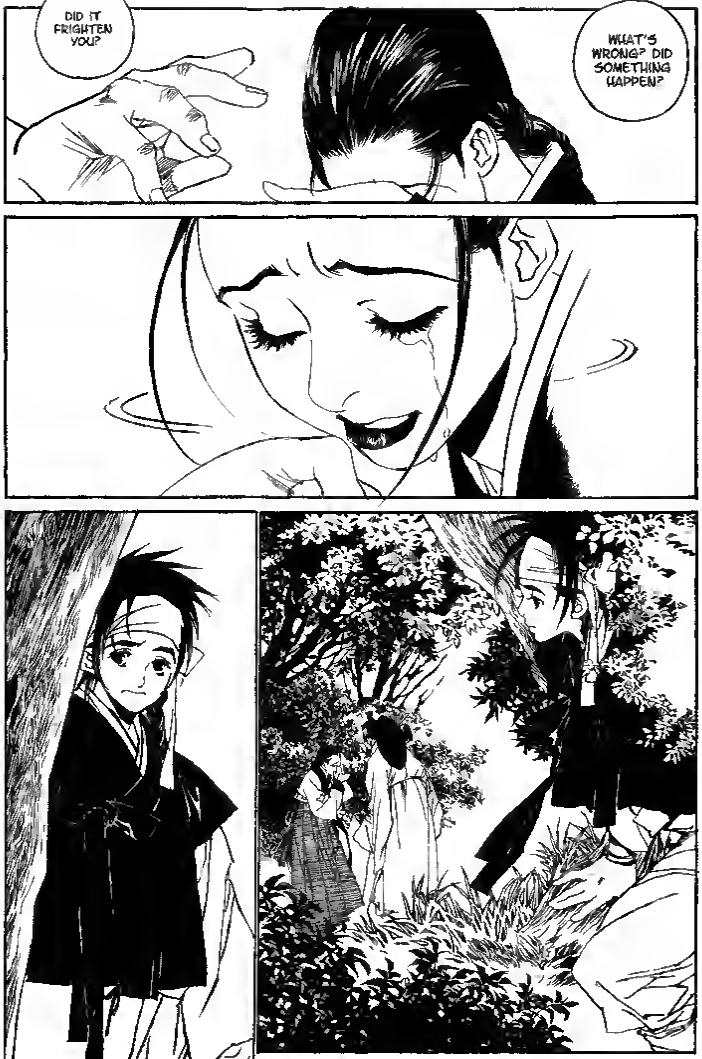
FATHER?!

YES I DID COME NOW LET'S GO BACK DOWN
BEFORE THE TIGER APPEARS



WHAT PART OF YOU DOESN'T BELONG TO THIS WORLD?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
I CAN'T
I NO LONGER BELONG TO THIS WORLD

HYEON-NA?!


DID IT FRIGHTEN YOU?
WHAT'S WRONG? DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?

End of "Yama ni Sumu Kami"

Yama ni Sumu Kami

by Sumeragi Natsuki

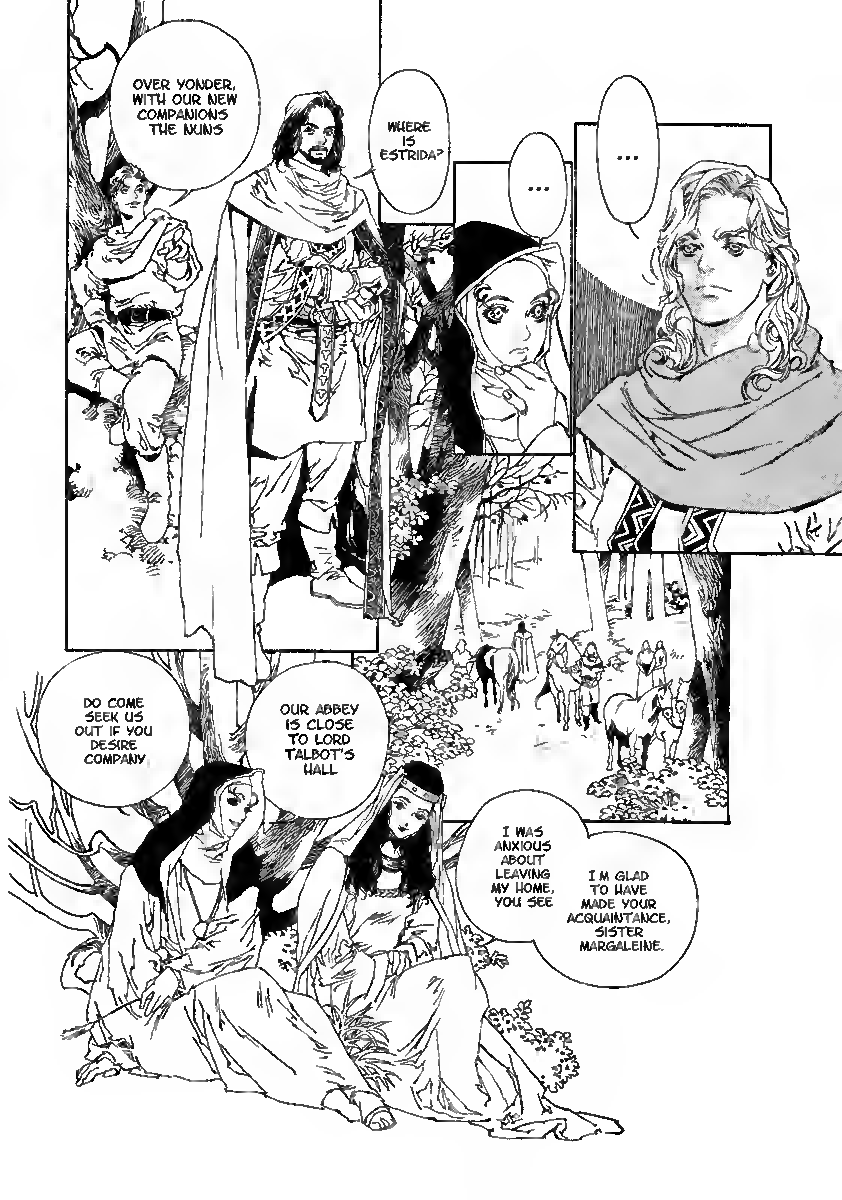
Happy Birthday, Renpii-cat!

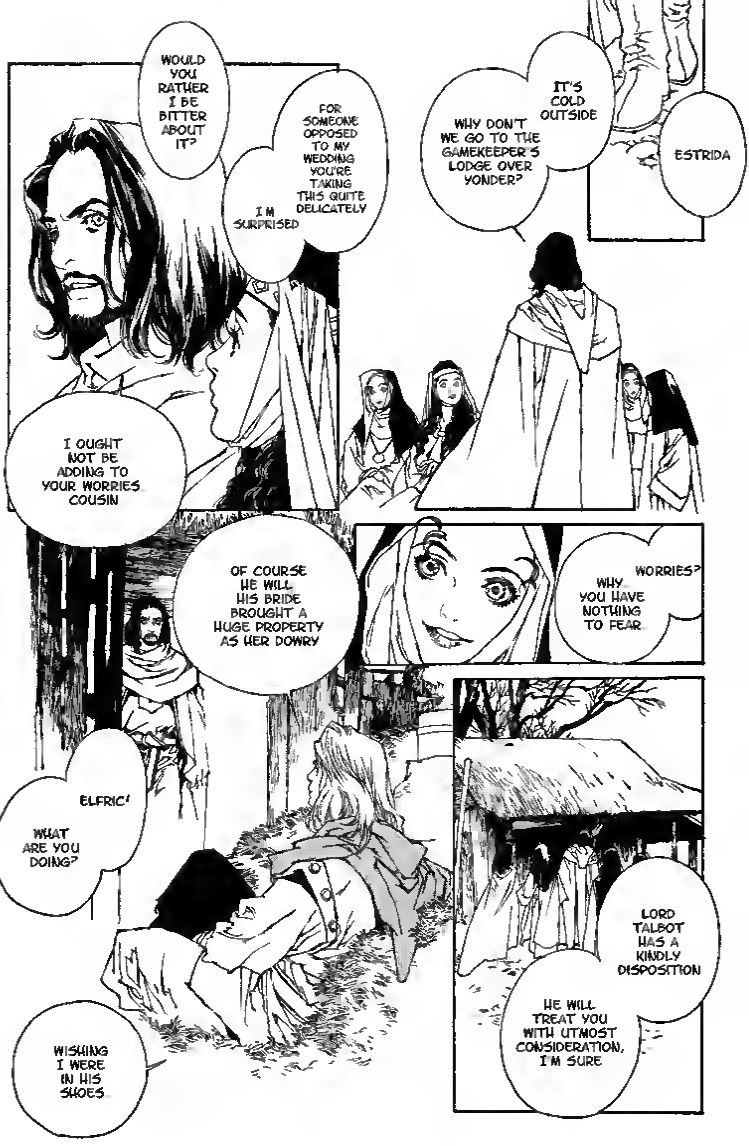
Ryakudatsu Sareta Musume
(The Abducted Maiden)

WELL, WELL
IF IT ISN'T SISTER MARGALEINE!
WE BEG YOUR PARDON BEING A TRAVELING PARTY MADE UP ENTIRELY OF WOMEN WE'VE FOUND OURSELVES IN A PREDICAMENT
WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO ALLOW US TO JOIN YOU?

AYE. WE'RE BOUND HOMEWARD AFTER FETCHING HIS LORDSHIP'S BRIDE
WHY, ELFRIC!
WOULD THAT BE LORD TALBOT'S...?
THEN AGAIN, DON'T YOU REGULARLY WORK IN THE FIELDS? SHOULDN'T THAT BE GOOD ENOUGH TO TOUGHEN YOU UP?
BUT, ALAS, THE BRIDE'S SIDE IS ILL-PREPARED.
SO WE CAN'T AFFORD TO VOUCH FOR YOUR PARTY'S SAFETY
SHALL I TEST IT OUT ON YOU?
YOUR LIFE
IS YOUR OWN TO PROTECT
ARE YOU IMPLYING THAT HAVING US AS TRAVELING COMPANIONS WILL BE A BOTHER?
I ASSURE YOU, HOWEVER THAT I HAVE CONFIDENCE IN MY PHYSICAL STRENGTH

SISTER MARGALEINE!
HOW COULD A SERVANT OF THE LORD SAY SUCH A THING?!
ELFRIC!
DO STOP BEING NASTY LET THEM COME WITH US
DO YOU MIND, RICHARD?
NOT AT ALL, COUSIN
ARE YOU BOUND FOR ABERDARON AS WELL, SISTERS?
IT WAS A JEST, MOTHER!
YES, WE ARE
WE BELONG TO THE ABERDARON ABBEY
AH!
I DON'T SEE WHY WE SHOULDN'T TRAVEL TOGETHER, THEN
AND HOW COULD I TURN DOWN MY COUSIN'S REQUEST?
WE ARE SHORT OF MEN AS IT IS
AND YOU INTEND TO INCREASE OUR BURDEN?
YOU ARE THE BURDEN, ELFRIC
SIR RICHARD!!


OVER YONDER, WITH OUR NEW COMPANIONS THE NUNS
WHERE IS ESTRIDA?
...
...
DO COME SEEK US OUT IF YOU DESIRE COMPANY
OUR ABBEY IS CLOSE TO LORD TALBOT'S HALL
I WAS ANXIOUS ABOUT LEAVING MY HOME, YOU SEE
I'M GLAD TO HAVE MADE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE, SISTER MARGALEINE.


ESTRIDA
IT'S COLD OUTSIDE
WHY DON'T WE GO TO THE GAMEKEEPER'S LODGE OVER YONDER?
I'M SURPRISED FOR SOMEONE OPPOSED TO MY WEDDING YOU'RE TAKING THIS QUITE DELICATELY
WOULD YOU RATHER I BE BITTER ABOUT IT?
I OUGHT NOT BE ADDING TO YOUR WORRIES COUSIN
WORRIES?
WHY YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR
OF COURSE HE WILL. HIS BRIDE BROUGHT A HUGE PROPERTY AS HER DOWRY
ELFRIC!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
LORD TALBOT HAS A KINDLY DISPOSITION
HE WILL TREAT YOU WITH UTMOST CONSIDERATION, I'M SURE
WISHING I WERE IN HIS SHOES

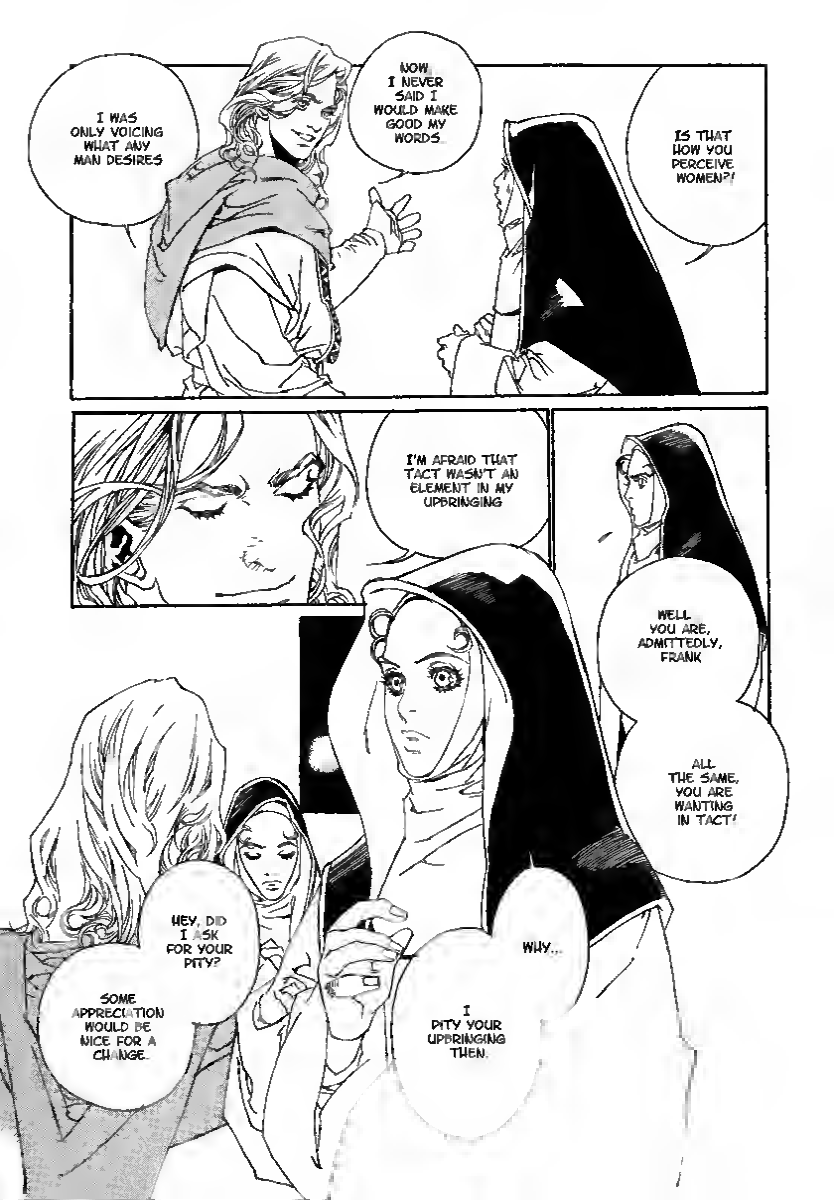
MARRYING OFF HIS ONLY DAUGHTER TO AN IMPOVERISHED NOBLEMAN WHO S DRIVEN BY WEALTH
WHAT IS MY UNCLE THINKING?
ELFRIC!!
WELL I CAN'T ARGUE WITH ELFRIC
HE MUST HAVE ARRANGED FOR THE PORTION OF LAND RECEIVED BY LORD TALBOT TO FALL INTO YOUR FAMILY'S POSSESSION IN NO TIME
ASSUMING THAT THE MISERLY SIR LATIMER HAD A HAND IN THIS,
YOUR FATHER WAS THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MATCH BETWEEN LADY ESTRIDA AND THAT DESTITUTE NOBLEMAN!
CONGRATU-LATIONS!
YOU, SIR, WILL BE THE ONE TO BENEFIT IN THE LONG RUN!
YOU ARE ONE TRYING MAN!
DO YOU THINK I WOULD TAKE DELIGHT IN MEAGER LEFTOVERS FROM ESTRIDA'S DOWRY?!

I AM NOTHING LIKE MY FATHER
NOTHING!!
AND HERE I THOUGHT YOU'D BE DELIGHTED BY THE PROSPECT OF AMASSING YOUR FORTUNE
YOU ARE FAMOUS FOR YOUR AMBITIONS SIR RICHARD
ELFRIC!!
FINE, FINE
I SEE I'M NOT WELCOME HERE
PERHAPS A RESULT OF HIS DEPLORABLE CIRCUMSTANCES
YES HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CYNIC—
IS THAT HOW HE USUALLY CARRIES HIMSELF?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
IT SEEMS THAT HE COMES FROM A NOBLE BACKGROUND.
IN HIS FATHER'S DAY HOWEVER,
BECAUSE OF SOME OFFENSE OR ANOTHER THE FAMILY LOST ITS ENTIRE FORTUNE AND FELL INTO HARDSHIP
I SEE THAT EXPLAINS HIS ARROGANCE
BARELY TWO OR THREE DAYS AFTER HIS ARRIVAL IN OUR ESTATE,
HE WAS ALREADY STIRRING TROUBLE
I AM RELIEVED THAT HE IS HERE WITH US, SEEING THAT FOR THE LAST FEW MONTHS BRIGANDS HAVE BEEN PLAGUING THESE PARTS DURING THE DAYTIME
EVEN SO, HE IS RENOWNED FOR HIS SKILLS IN ARCHERY.
OH DEAR
THERE WAS ONCE AN OUTLAW WHO RANSACKED HOMES IN OUR ESTATE
TO OUR RELIEF, HE WAS FINALLY CAUGHT. BUT... HE MANAGED TO ESCAPE
MANORS ARE BEING RAIDED HITHER AND THITHER...
COULD IT BE THAT HE CAME HERE?

REST HERE UNTIL IT'S TIME TO GO.
DON'T LET IT DISTRESS YOU COUSIN
ELFRIC!!
HOW COULD YOU SAY SUCH TERRIBLE THINGS TO SOMEONE WHO'S GETTING MARRIED?
WHAT THINGS?
SISTER
CERTAINLY I KNOW FULL WELL
LORD TALBOT IS AN HONEST CHARACTER
HE WOULD NOT CHOOSE A WIFE OUT OF A DESIRE FOR HER WEALTH
AS HIS RETAINER YOU OUGHT TO KNOW THAT WELL.
THAT IN THIS WORLD, THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A MARRIAGE NOT MOVED BY SELF-INTEREST

IF I HAD THE CHANCE I WOULD CERTAINLY SEIZE IT
MARRYING AN HEIRESS TO A GREAT MANOR...
WOULD GIVE ME OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT
...!
WELL... BY NO MEANS IS MARRIAGE BY ABDUCTION AN AGREEABLE NOTION TO SIR LATIMER
I WOULD NOT PUT IT PAST YOU, THOUGH
IT'S TRUE
HAVE YOU KNOWN ME TO LIE?
IS IT TRUE.
THAT LORD TALBOT AND SIR LATIMER HAD AN AGREEMENT?
BUT IF HE REALLY WAS AFTER HER PROPERTY WHY WOULD HE GIVE IT UP AFTER PROCURING IT?
MANY LORDS PRACTICE BRIDE KIDNAPPING IN ORDER TO ACQUIRE WEALTH BY FORCE.
YOUR LOGIC IS OUTRAGEOUS

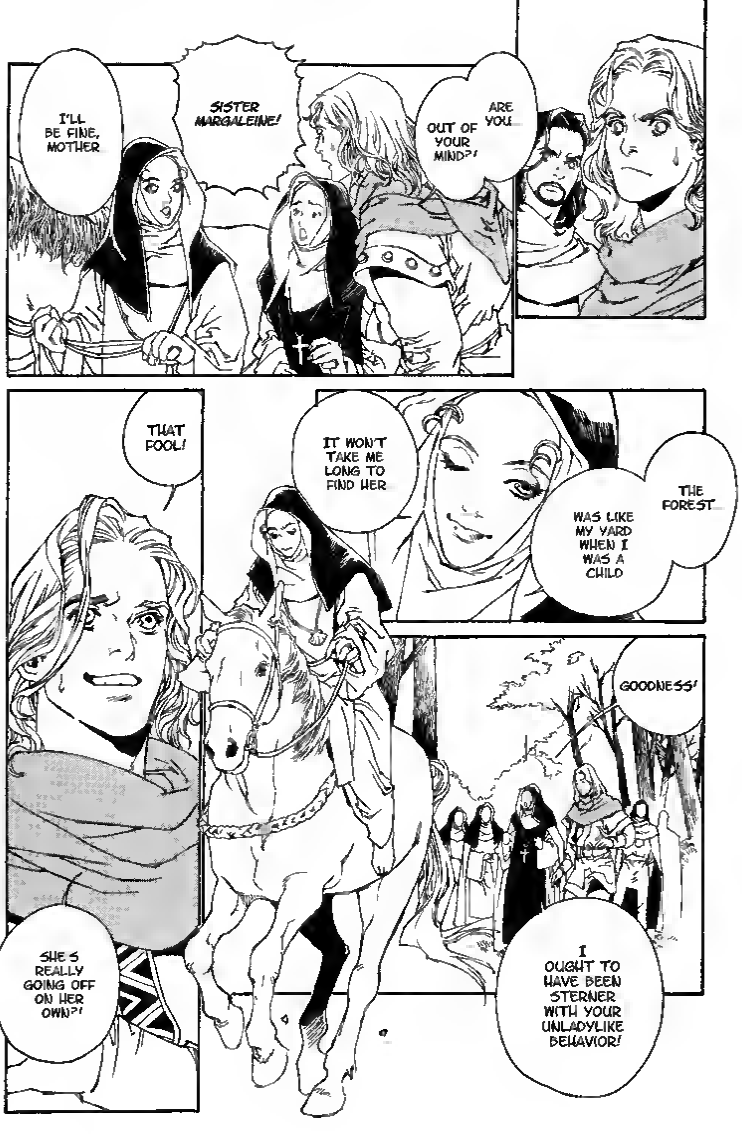

I WAS ONLY VOICING WHAT ANY MAN DESIRES
WOW. I NEVER SAID I WOULD MAKE GOOD MY WORDS
IS THAT HOW YOU PERCEIVE WOMEN?!
?
I'M AFRAID THAT TACT WASN'T AN ELEMENT IN MY UPBRINGING
WELL, YOU ARE, ADMITTEDLY, FRANK
ALL THE SAME, YOU ARE WANTING IN TACT!
HEY, DID I ASK FOR YOUR PITY?
SOME APPRECIATION WOULD BE NICE FOR A CHANGE.
WHY...
I PITY YOUR UPBRINGING THEN.

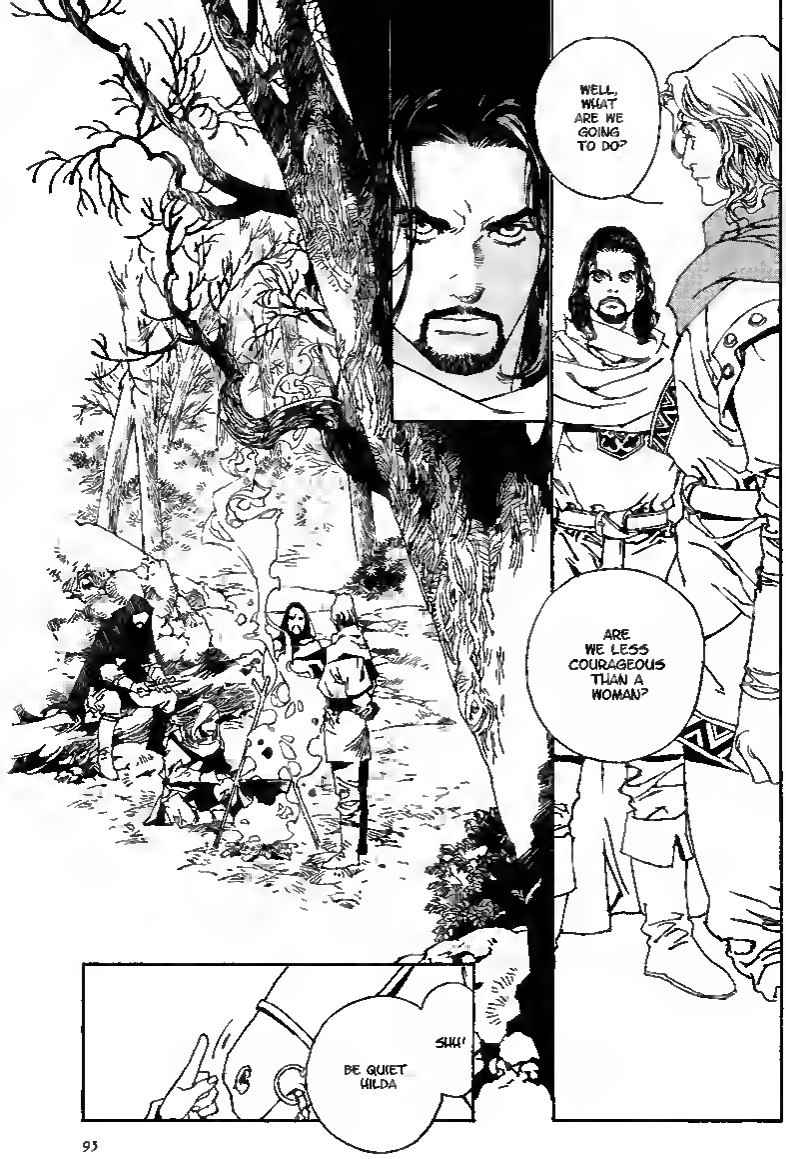
AM I NOT HERE AS A MEASURE AGAINST HIGHWAY ROBBERS?
WHY HASN'T ANYBODY THANKED ME?
A- APPRECIATION?!
IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIVES DON'T PINCH PENNIES WHEN HIRING GUARDS!!
DIDN'T I TELL YOU WE COULDN'T AFFORD TO WARRANT YOUR SAFETY?
IT WAS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD!
MY THANKS GO TO THOSE WHO DESERVE THEM
WHO, MIGHT I ASK, WAS IT THAT NEARLY FORSOOK US?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? DOESN'T YOUR ABBEY ASK FOR LARGE SUMS OF ALMS?
OUR ABBEY IS DISADVANTAGED!

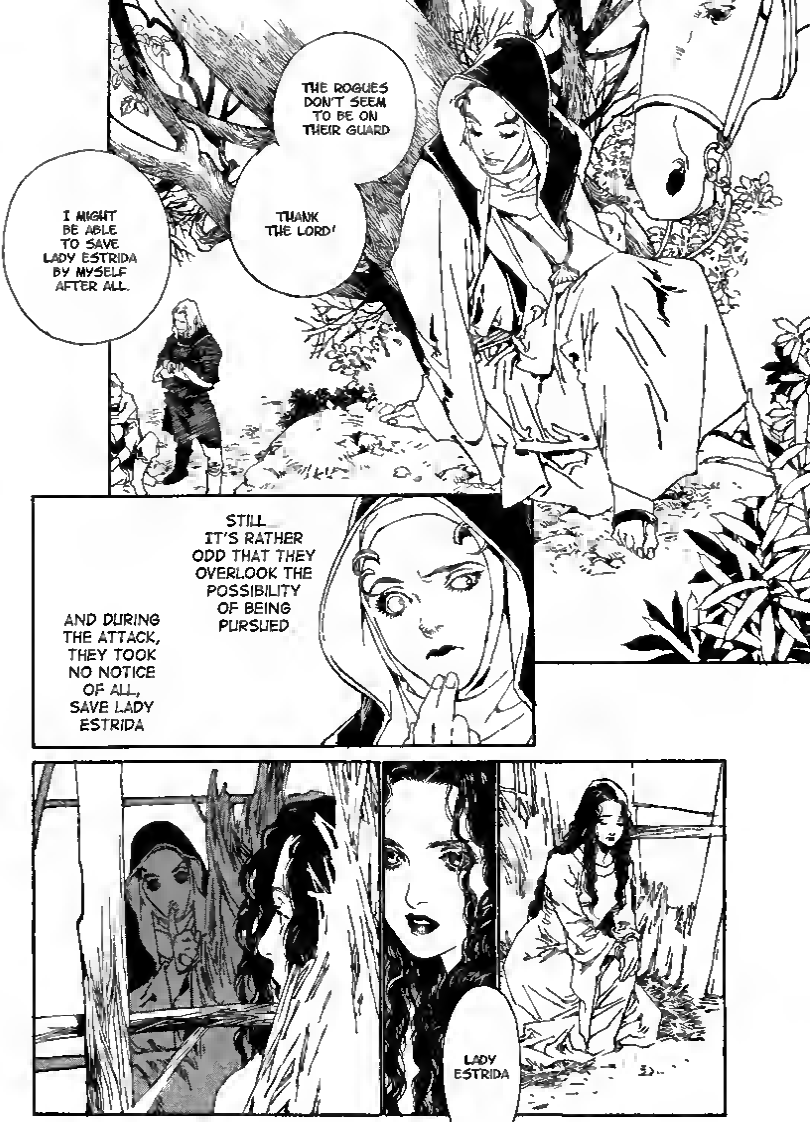
YOU OUGHT TO BE CONCERNED FOR YOUR OWN LIFE, SISTER
YOUR SERMONS WILL BE LOST ON CROOKS
INSTEAD OF WORRYING FOR MY SOUL
HOW COULD YOU SAY SUCH THINGS THAT MIGHT WELL COMPROMISE YOUR SOUL?!
OUR ABBEY DOES NO SUCH THING!!
!!
NOOOOO!

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!
ELFRIC!!
?!
LADY ESTRIDA... A GROUP OF BRIGANDS TOOK HER!
IS THIS THE TIME TO BICKER?!
WASN'T SHE WITH YOU THIS ENTIRE TIME?!
I WAS NOT TOLD TO BE BY HER SIDE 'ROUND THE CLOCK!
NOW LOOK WHAT HAPPENED!
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO GUARD HER!

WE SHOULD RESUME OUR JOURNEY TO ABERDARON AND ASK FOR THE BAILIFF'S HELP
WAIT!
WE DON'T KNOW OUR WAY 'ROUND THE FOREST. WE COULD END UP GETTING LOST AND CAPTURED BY CAITIFFS.
...
NO, IT ISN'T
SISTER MARGALEIVE IS RIGHT.
KNOWING THE ATROCITY OF THE ROGUES IN THESE PARTS,
THERE IS NOT A MOMENT TO LOSE!!
BUT—
...
IF NONE OF YOU ARE GOING
I WILL!
VERY WELL!


I'LL BE FINE, MOTHER
SISTER MARGALEINE!
ARE YOU... OUT OF YOUR MIND?!
THAT FOOL!
IT WON'T TAKE ME LONG TO FIND HER
THE FOREST... WAS LIKE MY YARD WHEN I WAS A CHILD
GOODNESS!
SHE'S REALLY GOING OFF ON HER OWN?!
I OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN STERNER WITH YOUR UNLADYLIKE BEHAVIOR!


WELL, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
ARE WE LESS COURAGEOUS THAN A WOMAN?
SHH!
BE QUIET HILDA

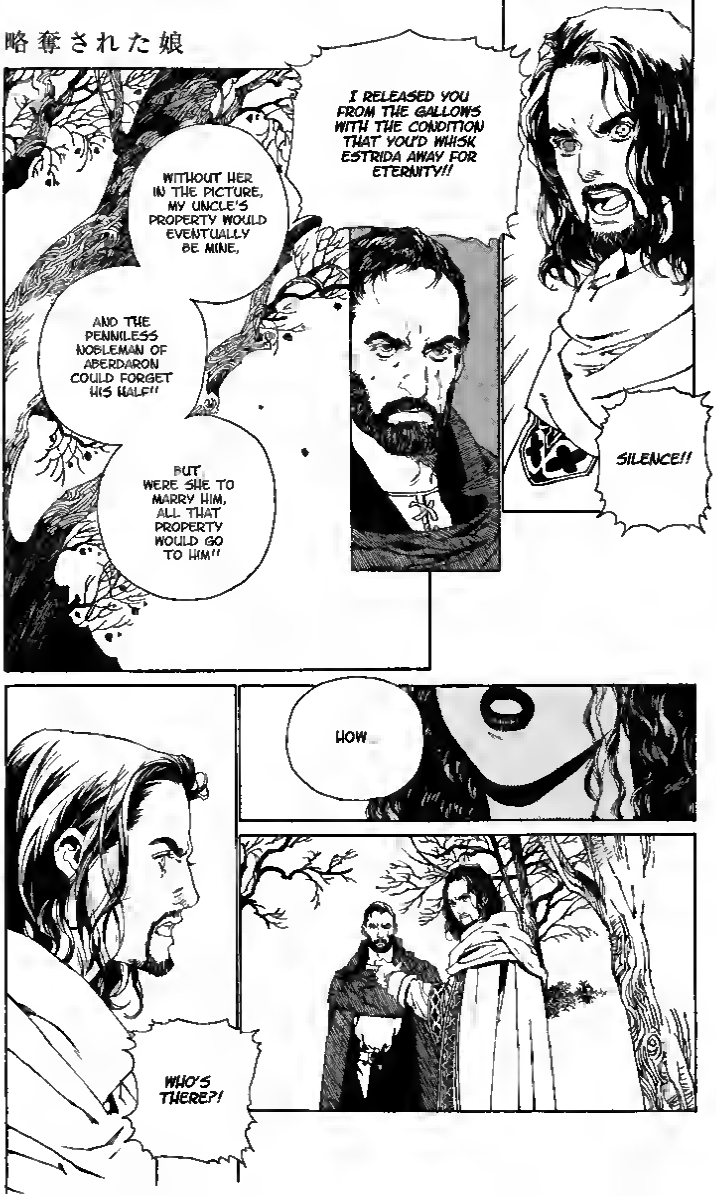

THE ROGUES DON'T SEEM TO BE ON THEIR GUARD
THANK THE LORD!
I MIGHT BE ABLE TO SAVE LADY ESTRIDA BY MYSELF AFTER ALL.
STILL... IT'S RATHER ODD THAT THEY OVERLOOK THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING PURSUED
AND DURING THE ATTACK, THEY TOOK NO NOTICE OF ALL, SAVE LADY ESTRIDA
LADY ESTRIDA

I HAVE COME TO HEAR YOUR CONFESSION
CONFESSION?!
WHERE'D YOU COME FROM?
HEY!
I AM NOT A PRIEST
OH, NO
AND THEREFORE UNABLE TO
HURRY!
LORD FORGIVE ME
GRANT YOU ABSOLUTION!!

THE WOMAN'S GONE!!
!!
LET'S SPLIT UP HERE
clop clop
AGAIN?!
WHY YOU LIKE TO SPLIT FORCES ELUDES ME!
IT MAKES FOR GREATER EFFICIENCY
YES, I SUPPOSE BUT—

...
JUST GO!!
SCRUNCH

CLOP CLOP
WILL WE MAKE IT OUT SAFELY?
SISTER
WHERE IS ESTRIDA?
WE WILL
DON'T FRET
CLOP CLOP
DID YOU HEAR NEIGHS?
!
NEIGH!
YOU SENT PURSUERS
YOUR DEEDS DO NOT MIRROR YOUR WORDS, YOU SON OF A BARON
WHY DIDN'T YOU KEEP AN EYE ON HER?!
SHE FLED?!


I RELEASED YOU FROM THE GALLOWS WITH THE CONDITION THAT YOU'D WHISK ESTRIDA AWAY FOR ETERNITY!!
SILENCE!!
WITHOUT HER IN THE PICTURE, MY UNCLE'S PROPERTY WOULD EVENTUALLY BE MINE,
AND THE PENNILESS NOBLEMAN OF ABERDARON COULD FORGET HIS HALF!!
BUT WERE SHE TO MARRY HIM, ALL THAT PROPERTY WOULD GO TO HIM!!
HOW...
WHO'S THERE?!

WELL, WELL.
HELLO, COUSIN
AIEEEEE!

JAB.
RUN, LADY ESTRIDA!!

!!
THAT WAS A CLOSE ONE
WHY MUST YOU—
NAY, GOOD WORK ELFRIC
THAT'S THE CAITIFF WHO KILLED ESTRIDA AND SISTER MARGALEINE
WHATEVER DO YOU MEAN?
KILLED THEM?
AREN'T THEY ALIVE?

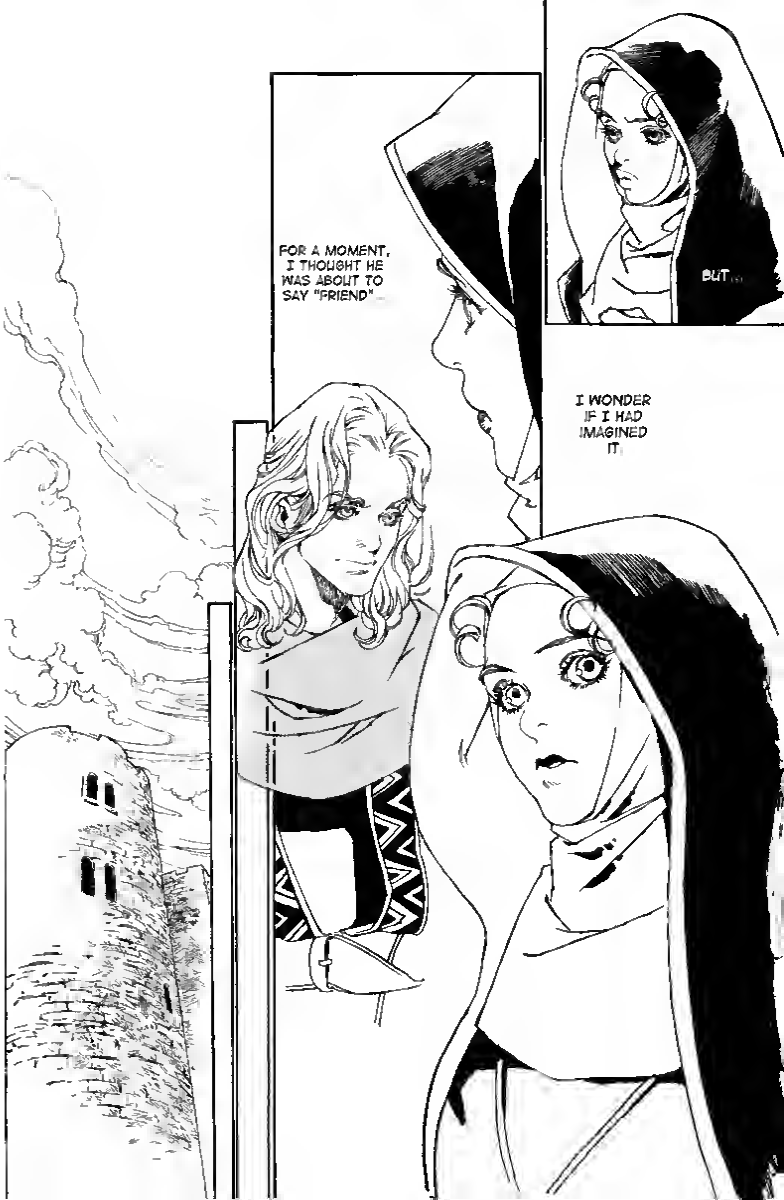
HE WANTS HIS UNCLE'S PROPERTY ALL FOR HIMSEL—
ELFRIC!!
SILENCE!
?!
ELFRIC,
TAKE HOLD OF ESTRIDA AND STAY THERE
RELEASE ME, YOU WICKED MAN!
BOTH THE KNIGHTHOOD AND THE WEALTH THAT YOUR FATHER LOST WILL BE RESTORED
DO THAT
AND I WILL PUT IN A GOOD WORD FOR YOU WITH THE KING

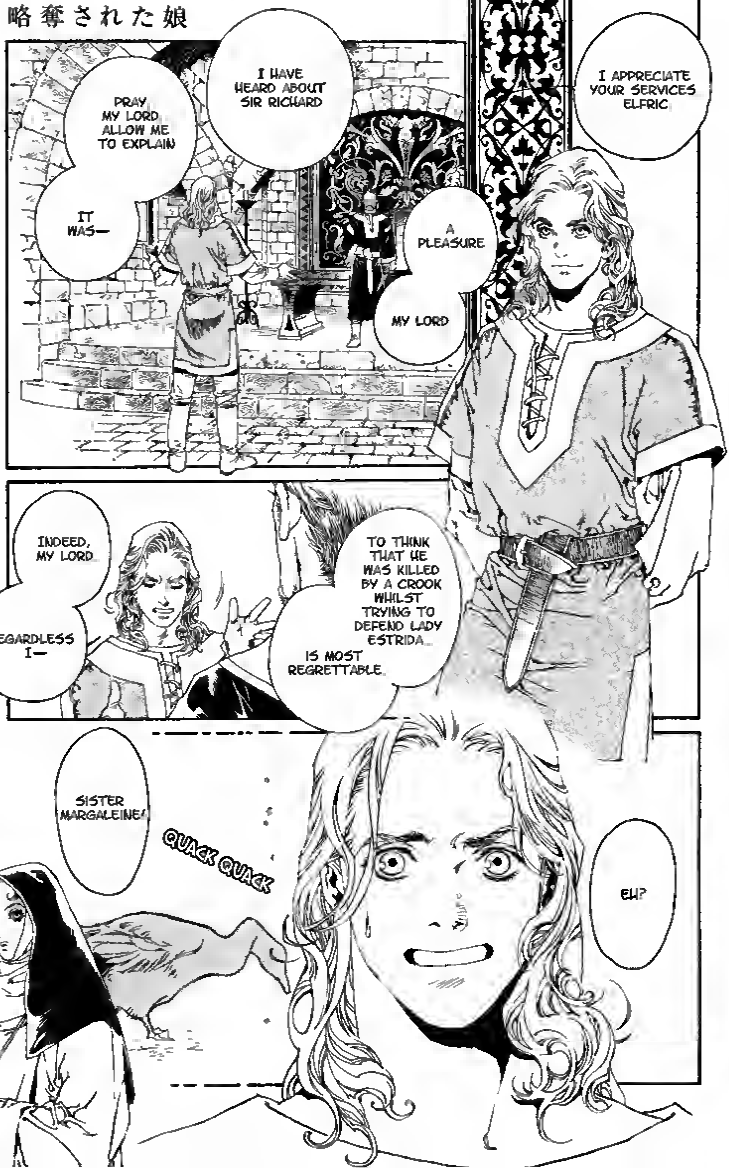
YOU'RE OUT OF LUCK SISTER!

JAB
...
THUD

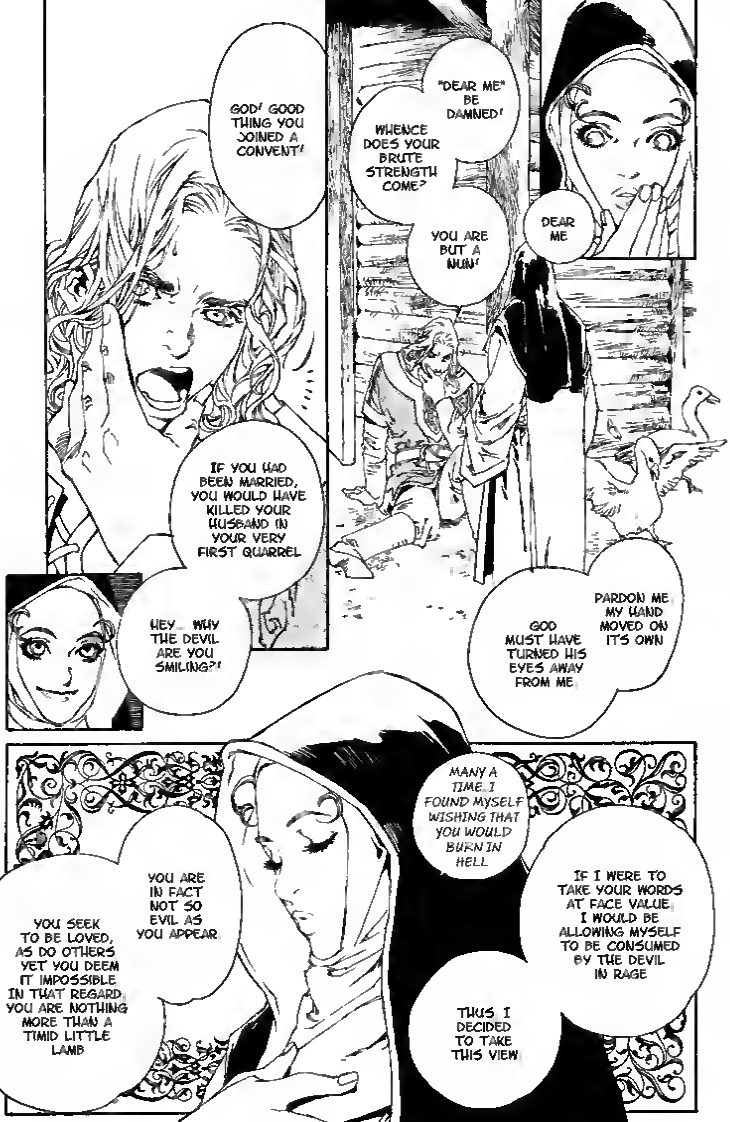
DAMN IT!!
EL—
?!
HOW FOOLISH OF ME!!
MY FATHER BROKE A LAW OF THIS COUNTRY DUE TO HIS TRIFLING CHIVALRY, AND AS A RESULT LOST EVERYTHING
TRIFLING CHIVALRY?
NUN OF NO CONSEQUENCE?!
I WAS THIS CLOSE TO RETRIEVING ALL THAT WAS LOST
BUT NO, I LET MY CHANCE SLIP THROUGH MY FINGERS
IF ONLY I HADN'T LET THAT SAME TRIFLING CHIVALRY CLOUD MY JUDGMENT AND INDUCE ME TO SAVE A NUN OF NO CONSEQUENCE!!
WELL... I CANNOT PICTURE HIM KEEPING A PROMISE MADE ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT

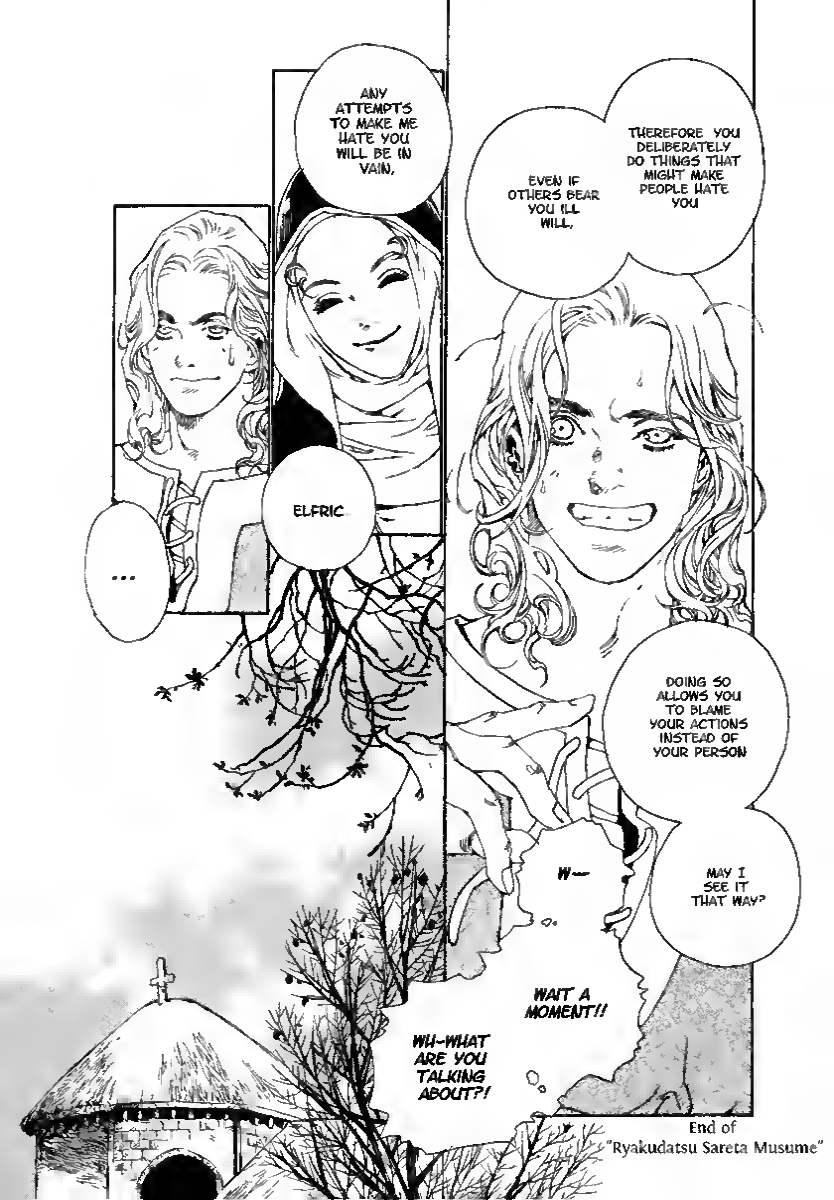
OH, I CANNOT BELIEVE...
THE WICKED THINGS THAT COME OUT OF YOUR MOUTH!!
I WOULD HAVE HAD A MEANS TO MAKE HIM!!
IF WE HAD KILLED YOU, I COULD HAVE USED THAT TO EXTORT HIM!
ENOUGH OF YOUR RIGHTEOUS PREACHING!
YOU ARE THE ONE TO BLAME FOR THIS!!
WHAT?
YOU ARE A F—
THAT WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION!!
INSTEAD OF BEMOANING SAVING ME
YOU SHOULD HAVE FORSAKEN ME...
...
YOU ARE FIRST AND FOREMOST A SERVANT OF GOD...
LEAVING YOU TO YOUR FATE WOULD ONLY WORK AGAINST MY SALVATION, WOULD IT NOT?


BUT...
FOR A MOMENT, I THOUGHT HE WAS ABOUT TO SAY "FRIEND"...
I WONDER IF I HAD IMAGINED IT.


I APPRECIATE YOUR SERVICES ELFRIC
A PLEASURE MY LORD
I HAVE HEARD ABOUT SIR RICHARD
PRAY MY LORD ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN
IT WAS—
TO THINK THAT HE WAS KILLED BY A CROOK WHILST TRYING TO DEFEND LADY ESTRIDA... IS MOST REGRETTABLE.
INDEED, MY LORD
REGARDLESS I—
EW?
SISTER MARGALEINE!
QUACK QUACK

I DID NOT KNOW
WOULD YOU RATHER I TOLD THE TRUTH?
NAY WERE IT KNOWN THAT I, A SINNER'S OFFSPRING, KILLED A SCION OF A BARON I WOULD BE IN DEEP WATER
I AM IN YOUR DEBT
STILL I NEVER WOULD HAVE EXPECTED YOU TO LIE FOR MY SAKE!
THAT THE MAN WAS KILLED AT THE HANDS OF THE CROOK
I ONLY MENTIONED IN PASSING THAT THE ONE RESPONSIBLE WAS A ROGUE
IT WAS NOT ESSENTIALLY A LIE, WAS IT?
YOU DO AFTER ALL, HAVE THE MAKINGS OF ONE
FURTHERMORE, SIR RICHARD WAS SPARED THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WRONGDOINGS
QUITE THE CONSPIRATOR AREN'T YOU?
I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT YOUR COMPLEXION IS RATHER DARK,
BUT I KNOW NOW THAT IT'S A MANIFESTATION OF YOUR BLACK HEART
WAS IT NOT A BLESSING?


GOD! GOOD THING YOU JOINED A CONVENT!
"DEAR ME" BE DAMNED!
WHENCE DOES YOUR BRUTE STRENGTH COME?
YOU ARE BUT A NUN!
DEAR ME
IF YOU HAD BEEN MARRIED, YOU WOULD HAVE KILLED YOUR HUSBAND IN YOUR VERY FIRST QUARREL
HEY... WHY THE DEVIL ARE YOU SMILING?!
GOD MUST HAVE TURNED HIS EYES AWAY FROM ME
PARDON ME MY HAND MOVED ON IT'S OWN
MANY A TIME I FOUND MYSELF WISHING THAT YOU WOULD BURN IN HELL
IF I WERE TO TAKE YOUR WORDS AT FACE VALUE, I WOULD BE ALLOWING MYSELF TO BE CONSUMED BY THE DEVIL IN RAGE
THUS I DECIDED TO TAKE THIS VIEW
YOU ARE IN FACT NOT SO EVIL AS YOU APPEAR
YOU SEEK TO BE LOVED, AS DO OTHERS YET YOU DEEM IT IMPOSSIBLE. IN THAT REGARD, YOU ARE NOTHING MORE THAN A TIMID LITTLE LAMB


ANY ATTEMPT'S TO MAKE ME HATE YOU WILL BE IN VAIN,
THEREFORE YOU DELIBERATELY DO THINGS THAT MIGHT MAKE PEOPLE HATE YOU
EVEN IF OTHERS BEAR YOU ILL WILL,
ELFRIC
...
DOING SO ALLOWS YOU TO BLAME YOUR ACTIONS INSTEAD OF YOUR PERSON
W—
MAY I SEE IT THAT WAY?
WAIT A MOMENT!!
WH-WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!

End of
"Ryakudatsu Sareta Musume"

Yama ni Sumu Kami

by Sumeragi Natsuki

Happy Birthday, Conner!

Translation:
Kurenai

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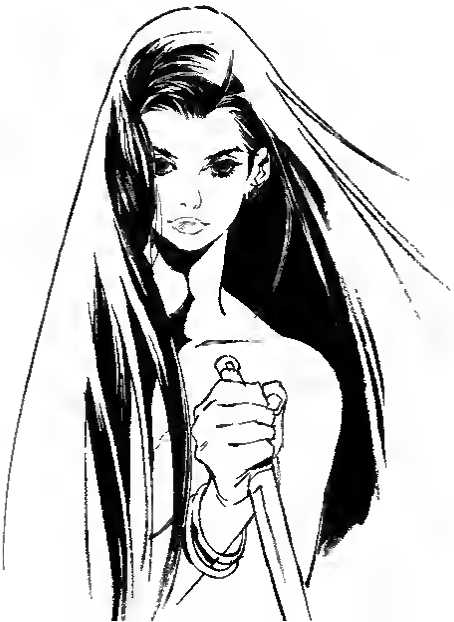
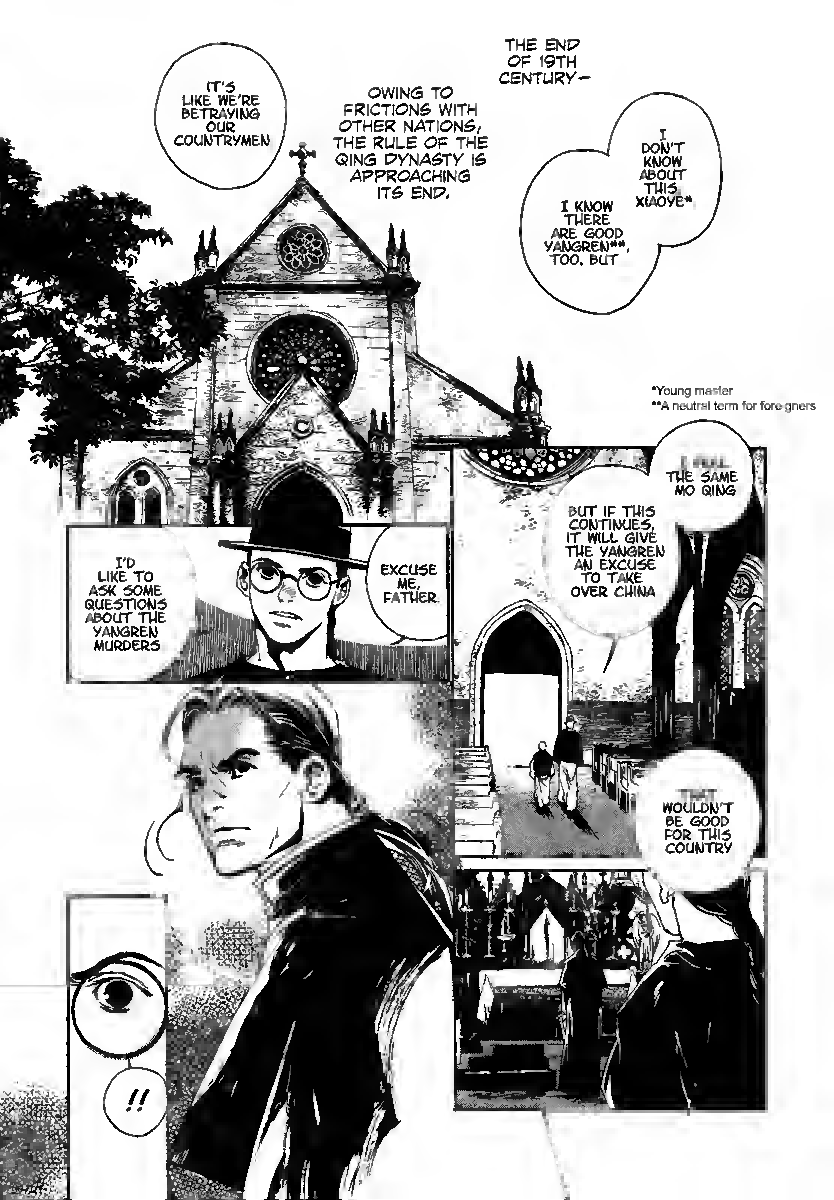
Toukasen
(The Fan of
Peach Blossoms)



YOUR NAME IS YU LING?
I KNEW YOUR FATHER
HE WAS A GREAT MAN
BUT HE LOST HIS LIFE BECAUSE OF THE YANGGUIZI*
*A pejorative term for Europeans literally "ocean ghosts"
ARE YOU... A PRIEST?
...

YOU WILL FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IN THE HOUSE OF GOD
COME AND PRAY
CRYING DOESN'T SOLVE ANYTHING
BUT WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

DAMN YANGGUIZI
DROWN IN YOUR OWN CURSED BLOOD.


THE END OF 19TH CENTURY—
OWING TO FRICTIONS WITH OTHER NATIONS, THE RULE OF THE QING DYNASTY IS APPROACHING ITS END.
IT'S LIKE WE'RE BETRAYING OUR COUNTRYMEN
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS, X(AOYE*
I KNOW THERE ARE GOOD YANGREN**, TOO, BUT
*Young master
**A neutral term for foreigners
I HATE THE SAME MO QING
BUT IF THIS CONTINUES, IT WILL GIVE THE YANGREN AN EXCUSE TO TAKE OVER CHINA
I'D LIKE TO ASK SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT THE YANGREN MURDERS
EXCUSE ME, FATHER
THAT WOULDN'T BE GOOD FOR THIS COUNTRY
!!

YES, IT'S TERRIBLE MOST DISTRESSING
WELL, WHAT IS IT YOU WANT TO ASK ME?
I HEARD THERE'S A MURDERER WHO HAS BEEN TARGETING YANGREN IN THIS AREA.
ER, YES
MURDERS?
EXCUSE ME
NOTHING REALLY. I WAS JUST CURIOUS ABOUT WHETHER IT WAS TRUE OR ONLY A RUMOR
XIAOYE,
WHAT'S WRONG? DIDN'T YOU WANT MORE (NFORMATION) ABOUT THE MURDERS BEFORE—?
HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A CLERGYMAN SO MURDEROUS LOOKING!
ONE SHOULDN'T BE CARELESS WHEN TALKING TO A PERSON ABOUT WHOM ONE KNOWS NOTHING
...

THIR-
TEEN...
FOUR-
TEEN
A BODYGUARD WITH A CANE?
HE SEEMS TO HAVE A BAD HAND, TOO
MAYBE THE YANGREN INSTALLED HIM THERE AS SOME KIND OF BODYGUARD?
MY FATHER SENT ME HERE FROM GUANGZHOU...
BECAUSE THE FOREIGN INVESTIGATORS WEREN'T GETTING ANYWHERE
WHOOSH
!!
?!
THE NEXT WILL MAKE EXACTLY FIFTEEN...
FALL
THAT FAN...

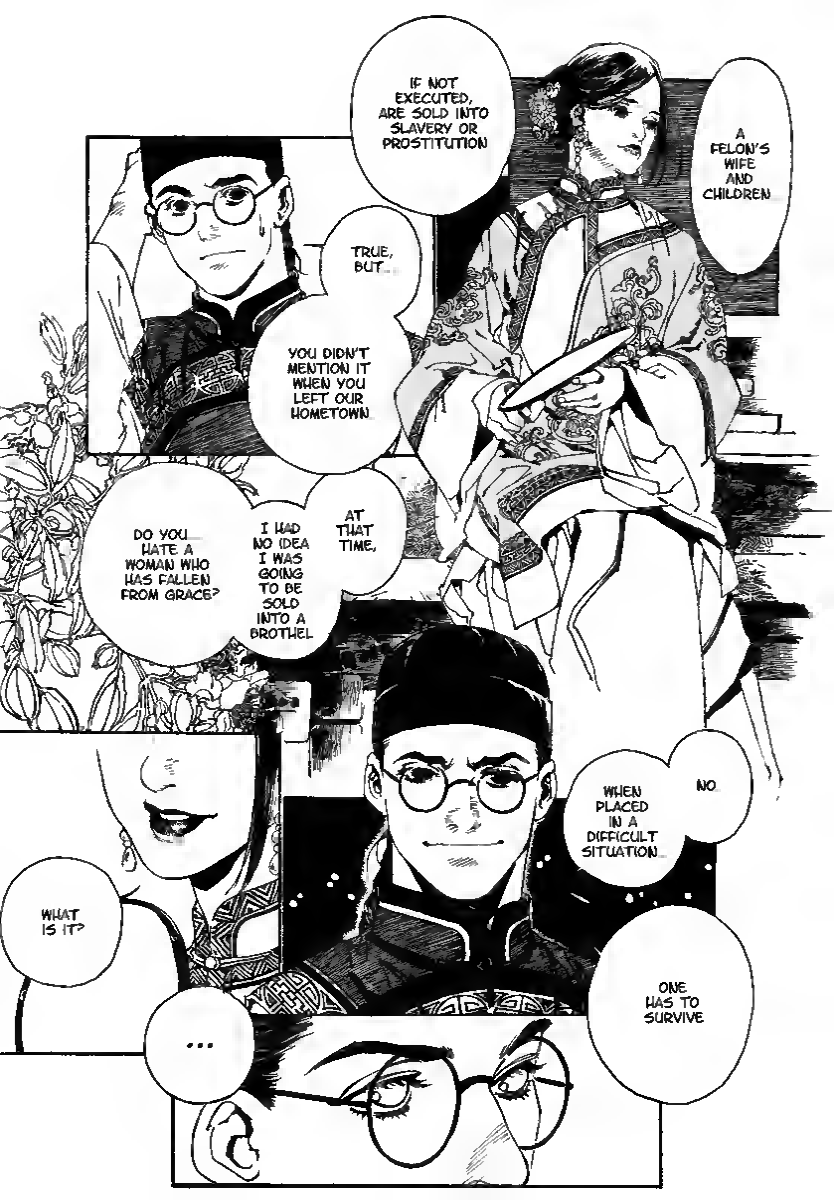
*Used to refer to a slightly older man than yourself equivalent to ni-san
CE LENG GE*?
YU LING?
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE YOU HERE!
IT'S BEEN SIX YEARS, HASN'T IT?
I'M VERY HAPPY TO SEE YOU AGAIN
THIS FAN...
IT IS THE SAME ONE FROM BACK THEN?
IT'S THE ONLY KEEPSAKE I HAVE FROM MY FATHER
HE WAS JUST ABOUT TO DECORATE IT WITH PEACH BLOSSOMS—MY FAVORITE—WHEN THE YANGREN AND THE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS BARGED INTO OUR HOME.
THEY CALLED MY FATHER A MURDERER
AND SUDDENLY STARTED FIRING

YU LING... DO YOU MIND IF I ALTER IT SOME?
EH?
...
FATHER'S BLOOD SPATTERED ACROSS HERE
I THINK IT'S TOO PAINFUL TO LEAVE IT AS IT IS, DON'T YOU?
!!

YOU'RE IMAGINING THINGS
DID I?
DID YOU ADD MORE BLOSSOMS?
I THOUGHT AS MUCH IT'S JUST A LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT I REMEMBER.
SNATCH!
YOU SAW US?
THAT WAS YI CE LENG, A FRIEND FROM MY CHILDHOOD
IT'S BEEN SIX YEARS SINCE I CAME TO THIS LAND AND PARTED WAYS WITH HIM
WHO WAS THAT MAN?
YOU WERE TALKING WITH HIM OUT FRONT

"A respectful form of address for a teacher/master/religious personality/practitioner of martial arts with the dual meaning of "master" and "father"
WHAT WAS HE DOING HERE?
HE SAID HE WAS SIGHTSEEING.
WAS THAT ALL?
THAT MAN, HE'S NOSING AROUND FOR SOMETHING
IS THERE SOMETHING ABOUT CE LENG GE?
WHAT'S THE MATTER, SHIFU*?
OF COURSE HE ISN'T! HIS FAMILY IS DESCENDED FROM THE HAN JUN ZHENG HUANG QI*
*Han Chinese Army of Plain Yellow Banner
HIS FATHER WAS A REMARKABLE MILITARY MAN WHO FOUGHT THE YANGGUIZI
HE WOULD NEVER [illegible] THE CHINESE!
TALKING BACK TO YOUR MASTER, ARE YOU?!
YOU'D BEST STAY AWAY FROM HIM
BUT, SHIFU—
YOU SHOULDN'T BE WASTING TIME ON REMINISCENCES!
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN YOUR DUTY?!

I NEVER FORGET IT!
I CAME HERE TODAY PRECISELY FOR THAT
I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D ACTUALLY COME
IF I HADN'T INTENDED TO COME I WOULDN'T HAVE ASKED FOR YOUR ADDRESS
BUT TO THINK YOU LIVE IN A BROTHEL OF ALL PLACES
SHIFU
PLEASE DECIDE MY NEXT QUARRY!


IF NOT EXECUTED, ARE SOLD INTO SLAVERY OR PROSTITUTION
A FELON'S WIFE AND CHILDREN
TRUE, BUT...
YOU DIDN'T MENTION IT WHEN YOU LEFT OUR HOMETOWN
AT THAT TIME,
I HAD NO IDEA I WAS GOING TO BE SOLD INTO A BROTHEL
DO YOU... HATE A WOMAN WHO HAS FALLEN FROM GRACE?
NO
WHEN PLACED IN A DIFFICULT SITUATION...
WHAT IS IT?
ONE HAS TO SURVIVE
...

YOU WERE CONSTANTLY ON MY MIND SIX YEARS AGO
I FEARED YOU WOULD BE TOO WEAK TO GO ON—
THAT YOU WOULD FALL INTO DESPAIR AND SUCCUMB TO SOME ILLNESS
BUT LOOK AT YOU NOW, SPARKLING WITH LIFE. YOU'RE LIKE A DIFFERENT PERSON.
IS THE NEW ME ON YOUR MIND?
MOST DEFINITELY.
IN A DIFFERENT SENSE OF THE PHRASE

LATELY, THE YANGGUIZI HAVE TIGHTENED THEIR SECURITY
IT'S DANGEROUS
I DON'T UNDERSTAND
WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, SHIFU
DON'T BE!
...
THE OTHER DAY AFTER I SPOKE WITH CE LENG GE,
AND NOW, YOU'RE WORRIED FOR ME?
YOU SCOLDED ME FOR BEING TOO FOCUSED ON THE PAST AND LOSING SIGHT OF MY GOAL
I WON'T EVER FORGET THE HUMILIATION OF MY FATHER.
AND NO WORDS CAN EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO YOU

SHIFU!!
XIAOYE!
I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU I COULDN'T TELL YOU FROM THE FOREIGNERS BECAUSE YOU CUT OFF YOUR QUEUE!
IS THAT A LETTER FROM YOUR FATHER?
YES.
HE'S ASKING ABOUT THE PROGRESS IN THE CASE
YOU CAN'T EXACTLY TELL HIM...
YOU'VE BEEN TOO OCCUPIED WITH VISITS TO A CERTAIN BROTHEL,
CAN YOU?

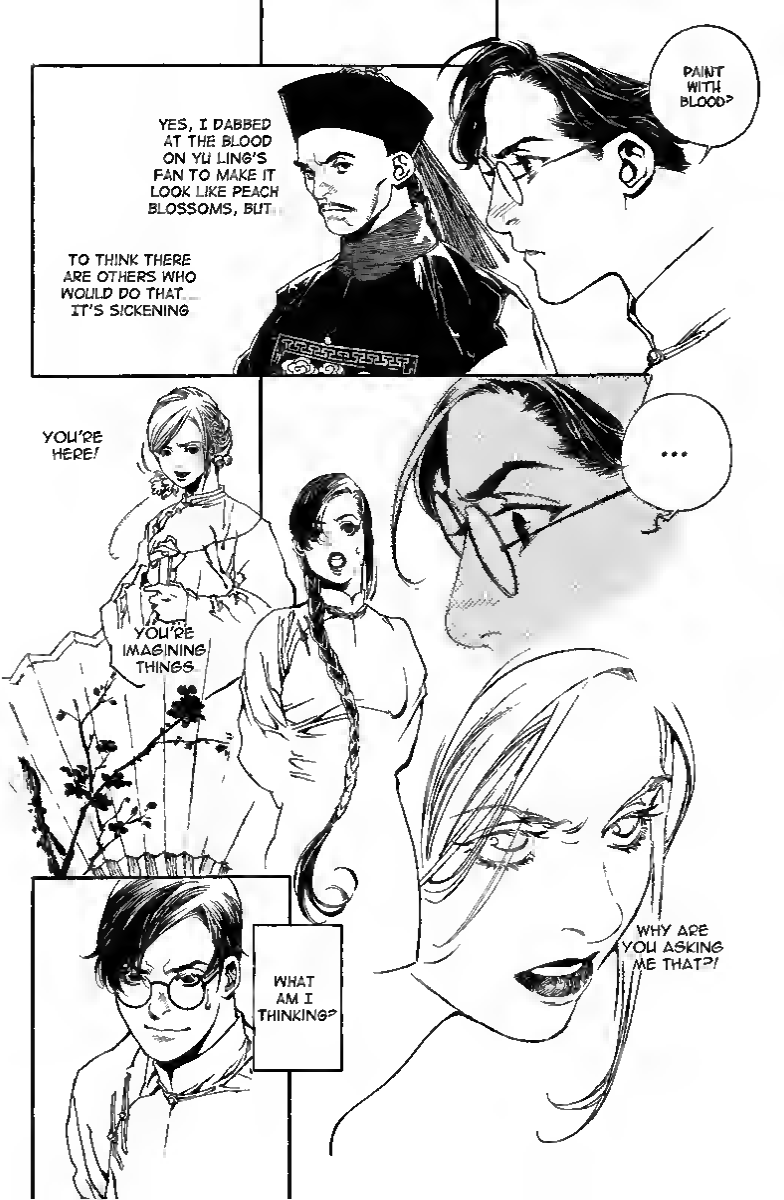
IT'S SOMETHING I GOT STUCK DOING
FINDING THE CULPRIT OR CULPRITS IS NO EASY MATTER
BUT I'M NOT A SPY OR A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL
I'M ONLY DOING THIS BECAUSE FATHER ENTRUSTED ME WITH THIS TASK, AND BECAUSE I HAVE A KNACK FOR GETTING INFORMATION FROM MY FELLOW CHINESE
QUIET, YOU!
I MAKE INQUIRIES THERE, TOO!
I UNDERSTAND THEIR MOTIVES, BUT I CAN'T AGREE WITH THE INDISCRIMINATE KILLINGS
EVEN IF I DO FIND THE CULPRITS
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF USING MY REVOLVER
YOU'RE ALSO A GOOD SHOT
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE...
WHAT WOULDN'T I GIVE TO LEAVE THIS BLOODY PLACE...

YU LING...
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT YU LING XIAOJIE*?
*Equivalent to Miss
!
YOU'RE HERE!
WHAT A SURPRISE!
HIDE
YU LING, I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU

YU LING,
I NEED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING
WHAT DO YOU THINK... OF YANGREN?
!!
WHY...
ARE YOU ASKING ME THAT?
ER... YOU SEE.
I'M THINKING OF REDEEMING YOU,
BUT MY FATHER—
XIAOYE!
A MOMENT, PLEASE

I'LL DROP BY SOME OTHER TIME.
...
EXCUSE ME, YU LING SOMETHING HAS COME UP.
VERY WELL.
WHAT ON EARTH? NOT ANOTHER ONE!

FIFTEEN, IF YOU INCLUDE THE COMPRADORS*
BUT THE MURDER TOLL IS SIX IN A YEAR AND A HALF
THE YANGREN HAD IT COMING, WALKING ALONE AT A TIME LIKE THIS
*Native agents for foreign trades in China
ARE YOU SAYING THE YANGREN MURDERER WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THOSE MURDERS, TOO?
COMPRA-DORS?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM
WHO MIGHT YOU BE?
THE TIP IS SOAKED WITH BLOOD INSTEAD OF INK
I KNOW THAT
A BRUSH
WHAT'S THAT?
TO WRITE OR PAINT SOMETHING?
I WONDER WHAT IT WAS USED FOR. IT CAN'T HAVE BEEN THE MURDER WEAPON
WE'VE FOUND A BRUSH LYING BESIDE PRACTICALLY EVERY VICTIM IN THIS STRING OF MURDERS


PAINT WITH BLOOD?
YES, I DABBED AT THE BLOOD ON YU LING'S FAN TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE PEACH BLOSSOMS, BUT...
TO THINK THERE ARE OTHERS WHO WOULD DO THAT... IT'S SICKENING
...
YOU'RE HERE!
YOU'RE IMAGINING THINGS
WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME THAT?!
WHAT AM I THINKING?

MO QING, THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT YOU TO LOOK UP FOR ME.
YOU'VE BEEN MEETING WITH THAT MAN?!
GOOD LORD!!
AND?
DON'T BE ANGRY! I DIDN'T LET HIM HINDER MY LAST ASSASSINATION
BUT HE GOT A LITTLE CURIOUS
I-I DIDN'T TELL HIM ANYTHING!
THAT MAN...
I HAD PEOPLE LOOK INTO HIS BACKGROUND.
OBVIOUSLY IF YOU HAD YOU WOULD NOW BE IN PRISON
HE ASKED ME WHAT I THOUGHT OF YANGREN ALL OF A SUDDEN

IS A PAWN
OF THE YANGREN
THIS WASN'T PAINTED IN ONE SITTING
SOME OF THE BLOOD STAINS ARE OLD ENOUGH TO BE ALMOST BLACK
ARE THEY?
WHOSE.

XIAOYE,
I HAVE INFORMATION!
DURING HIS DAYS AS GOVERNOR, YU LING XIAOJIE'S FATHER CAPTURED AN ASSASSIN FROM AN ANTI-YANGREN SOCIETY WHO HAD KILLED MANY YANGREN.
HE SECRETLY RELEASED THE ASSASSIN AFTER CRIPPLING ONE OF THE MAN'S HANDS AND LEGS
THE MAN CERTAINLY WOULD HAVE BEEN EXECUTED IF HE HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO TRIAL
YES THAT WAS WHY UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE YANGREN, THE GOVERNMENT GUNNED DOWN HER FATHER FOR TREASON
AND THE MAN WHO INFORMED ON HIM—
CREAK

IS IT TRUE?
YOU WERE ADOPTED BY A YANGREN?
YES
SEVEN YEARS AGO, AFTER LOSING THE WAR AGAINST FRANCE, MY FATHER WAS STRIPPED OF HIS RANK.
HE DIED OF WAR WOUNDS, BUT THERE WAS AN ENGLISH DOCTOR WHO TOOK CARE OF HIM.
AND THAT SAME ENGLISHMAN ADOPTED ME.
YOU LIED TO ME?! HOW DARE YOU!
I NEVER MEANT TO LIE TO YOU.
BUT SEEING THAT YOU HATE YANGREN...
I DON'T HATE THEM.
I ABHOR THEM.
I KNOW
I KNOW ALL TOO WELL

A SWORD STAINED WITH BLOOD AND GREASE AND A FAN WITH A PROFUSION OF PEACH BLOSSOMS, WHERE BEFORE THERE WERE ONLY A FEW
ALSO, THE NUMBER OF THESE EXTRA BLOOD-COLORED BLOSSOMS IS THE SAME AS THE NUMBER OF YANGREN MURDER VICTIMS
A COINCIDENCE?
...

I CAN'T AFFORD TO BE CAPTURED
GIVE ME BACK THE FAN
HAVEN'T YOU PAINTED ENOUGH?
THE YANGGUIZI TOOK MY FATHER'S LIFE BEFORE WE COULD PAINT PEACH BLOSSOMS ON THE FAN
I WILL KEEP ON PAINTING UNTIL THEIR BLOOD FILLS THE ENTIRE FAN!
THAT IS MY REQUIEM FOR FATHER, AS SHIFU TAUGHT ME!
SHIFU?

AND PAINT MORE BLOSSOMS WITH FRESH BLOOD
NOT UNTIL AFTER I KILL YOU...
HAND OVER THE FAN.
YOU MEAN THAT?
...
I'LL GIVE IT BACK TO YOU IF YOU PROMISE YOU'LL STOP KILLING YANGREN

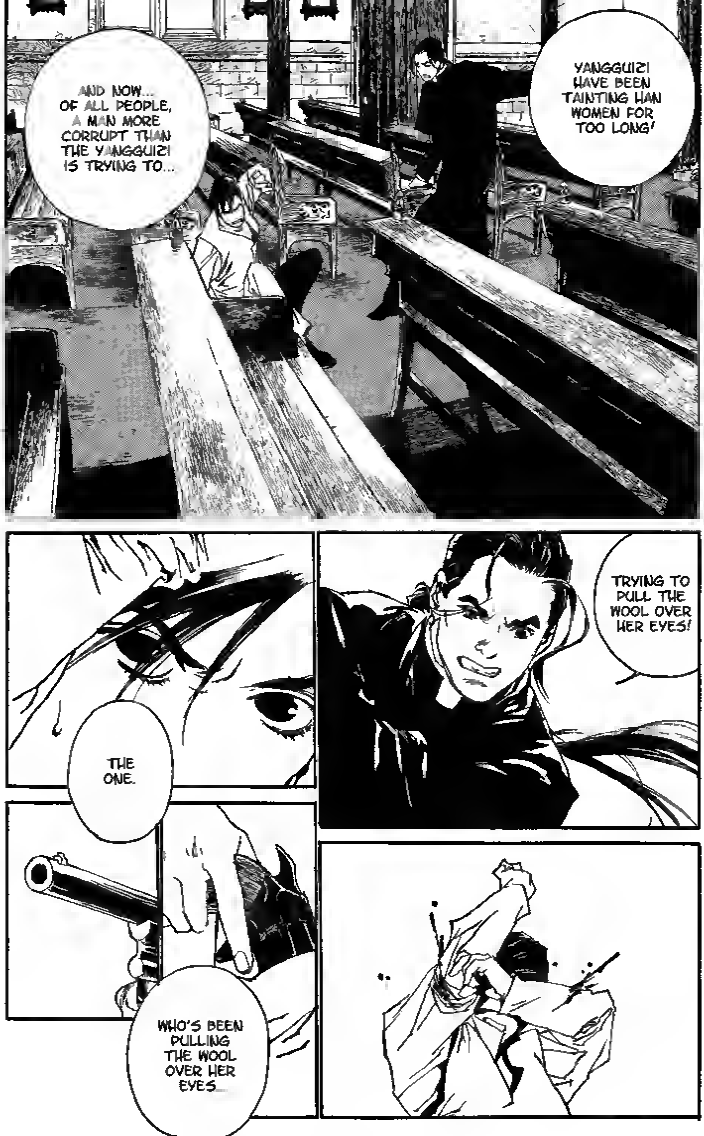
DASH
TAT
TH-THAT WAS A CLOSE ONE!
WERE YOU TRYING TO GET YOURSELF KILLED?!
ONE WRONG STEP, AND YOU COULD HAVE DIED!
BUT I DIDN'T
WHAT GAVE YOU THAT IDEA?

DID IT LOOK AS THOUGH I DID?
DID YOU HAVE EVERYTHING CALCULATED?
XIAOYE YOUR ARM!
TO BE HONEST, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I SHOULD DO
NOT AT ALL
...
WE HAVE TO GET IT TREATED!
I'LL GO CALL A DOCTOR

POOR YU LING'S FATHER
HE TOOK PITY
ON A FELLOW COUNTRYMAN, YET—
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU RE TALKING ABOUT.
WHAT OO YOU WANT?
THEY SAY THE PERSON WHO INFORMED ON HIM WAS A CRIPPLE
IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE LAST THING HE EXPECTED, TO BE REPAID IN THAT WAY BY THE MAN HE SAVED

HE HAD TO ATONE FOR IT THE ONLY WAY HE COULD.
HE SOLD HIS SOUL TO THE YANGGUIZI AND THE MANCHU EMPEROR WHO CURRIED FAVOR WITH THEM. A TRAITOR.
SAVED?
WHICH INVOLVED HIS OWN DEATH AND HIS DAUGHTER FOLLOWING IN YOUR FOOTSTEPS?
I MUST KILL YOU
CLANG
STAGGER
!

YOU PATHETIC FOOL!
YOU COME FROM A FAMILY WHOSE DUTY IS TO SHOW THE WESTERN BARBARIANS THE PRIDE OF THE CHINESE
YET YOU STOOP TO BE THEIR PET DOG?!
I'M SICK OF HEARING ABOUT UNDERCOVER AGENTS FREQUENTING BROTHELS
GOOD HEAVENS
YOU SHOULD HAVE MADE SURE THE BLEEDING HAD STOPPED BEFORE YOU CAME HERE


AND NOW... OF ALL PEOPLE, A MAN MORE CORRUPT THAN THE YANGGUIZI IS TRYING TO...
YANGGUIZI HAVE BEEN TAINTING HAN WOMEN FOR TOO LONG!
TRYING TO PULL THE WOOL OVER HER EYES!
THE ONE.
WHO'S BEEN PULLING THE WOOL OVER HER EYES...

...IS YOU!!
SLUMP
IF I HADN'T DONE THIS...
YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TRIED TO KILL ME
YOU REALLY ARE PATHETIC

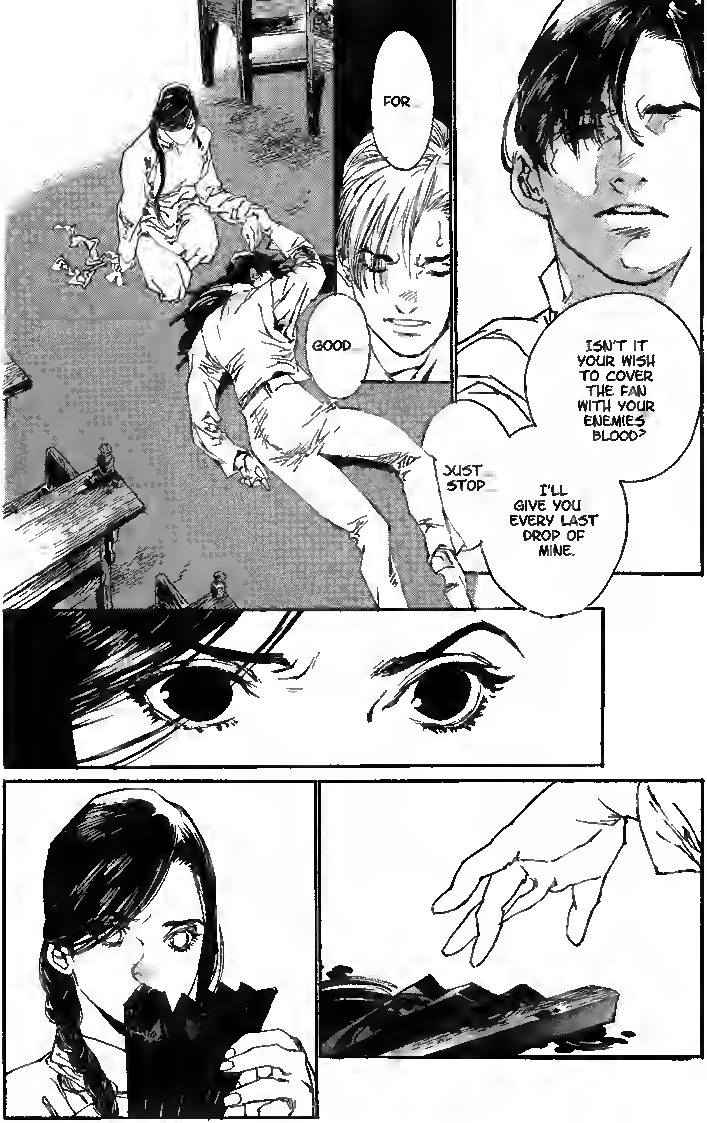
MY GRUDGE WAS WHAT KEPT ME ALIVE
JUST LIKE YU LING RIGHT NOW
HOWEVER ONCE I HAD GOTTEN MY REVENGE
I HAD NOTHING LEFT BUT EMPTINESS
I HAVE A REQUEST
MAKE USE OF MY CORPSE
WHAT?!
NOW THAT THE ASSASSIN IS DEAD
YU LING NEEDN'T BE INVOLVED
YOU DAMNED HER!!
ARE YOU SAYING SHE DIDN'T DO A THING?!
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!
IS THAT YOUR WAY OF ATONING FOR YOUR DEEDS?!
THAT'S
THE TRUTH

YOU CAME HERE AFTER ALL
...
DID YOU HEAR EVERYTHING?
YOU STILL ABHOR YANGREN?
...

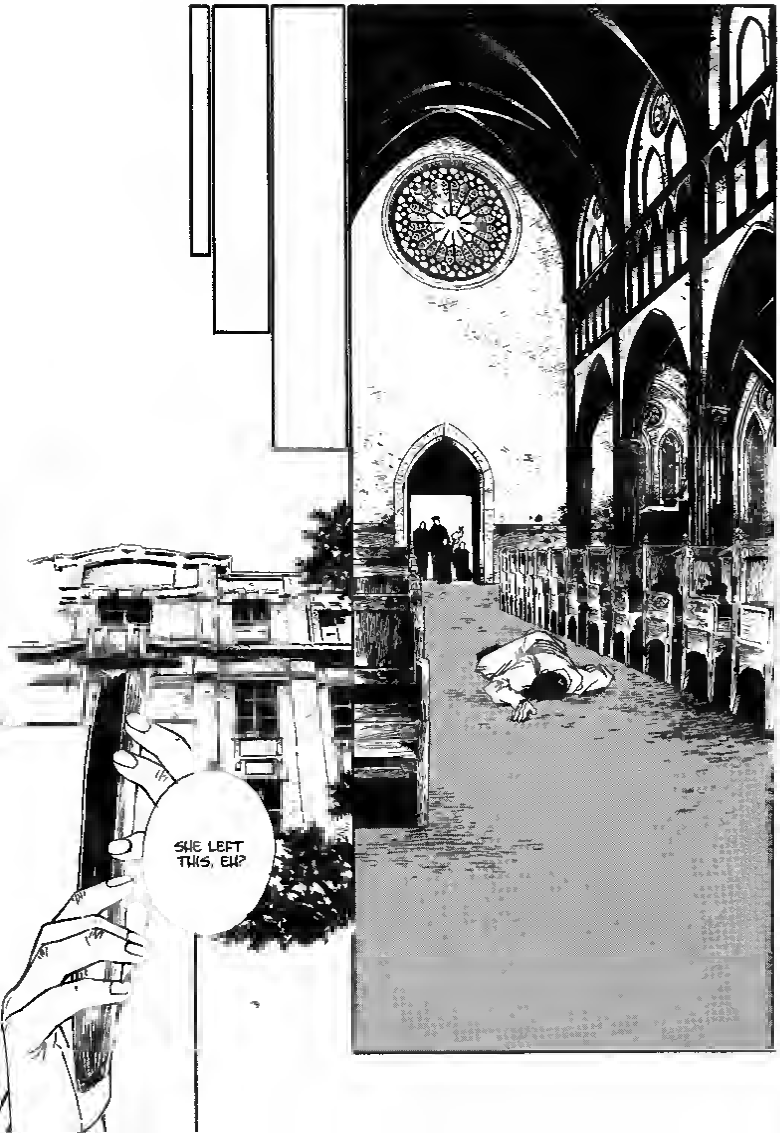
IN THAT CASE
LET MY BLOOD BE THE PAINT FOR YOUR BLOSSOMS
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO FORGET MY RESENTMENT AGAINST THEM?!
THE FACT REMAINS THAT YANGGUIZI WERE THE CAUSE OF MY FATHER'S DEATH
IT WAS THE ARROGANCE OF THOSE YANGGUIZI WHO ACT AS IF THEY RULE CHINA
THAT RUINED MY FAMILY!
...
HUFF
...

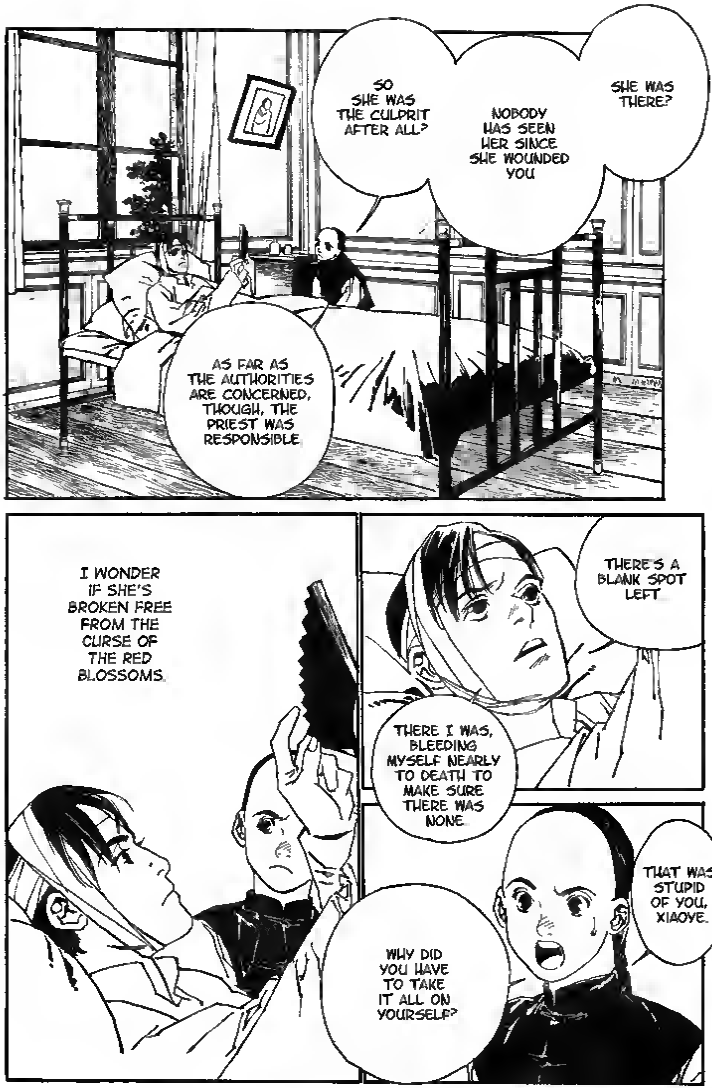
MY FAN...
!
FLUTTER
LET GO OF ME!
I'LL STOP THE BLEEDING.

I AM A MAN INDEBTED TO THE YANGREN
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SET ME APART
FROM THOSE YOU'VE KILLED
YOU'LL DIE.
IF YOU DON'T STOP THE BLEEDING AT ONCE,
YOU'RE STAYING LIKE THIS UNTIL THE FAN SOAKS UP ALL YOUR BLOOD?


FOR...
GOOD...
JUST STOP...
I'LL GIVE YOU EVERY LAST DROP OF MINE.
ISN'T IT YOUR WISH TO COVER THE FAN WITH YOUR ENEMIES BLOOD?

THIS WAY!
THE TRAIL OF BLOOD LEADS ALL THE WAY INTO THE CHURCH!
...
BAM


SHE LEFT THIS, EH?


SO SHE WAS THE CULPRIT AFTER ALL?
NOBODY HAS SEEN HER SINCE SHE WOUNDED YOU
SHE WAS THERE?
AS FAR AS THE AUTHORITIES ARE CONCERNED, THOUGH, THE PRIEST WAS RESPONSIBLE
I WONDER IF SHE'S BROKEN FREE FROM THE CURSE OF THE RED BLOSSOMS
THERE'S A BLANK SPOT LEFT
THERE I WAS, BLEEDING MYSELF NEARLY TO DEATH TO MAKE SURE THERE WAS NONE
THAT WAS STUPID OF YOU, XIAOYE.
WHY DID YOU HAVE TO TAKE IT ALL ON YOURSELF?

End of "Toukasen"

Yama ni Sumu Kami

by Sumeragi Natsuki

Happy Birthday, Ink!
With love and tons of
pats from the staff!

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Seirou Nyonin-koku
(Brothel: Women's Territory)

IT IS COMMONLY SAID OF PLEASURE HOUSES THAT THE BEDCLOTHES ARE FOREVER SOAKED IN THE TEARS OF WOMEN.
BUT FOR MEN, JU FANG TANG, ONE SUCH HOUSE, IS FILLED WITH AN ABUNDANCE OF TEMPTATIONS.
XUE YI!
TODAY, AS USUAL, THE MADAM'S BITING REPRIMANDS AND THE LADIES' FRETFUL CRIES CAN BE HEARD THERE.

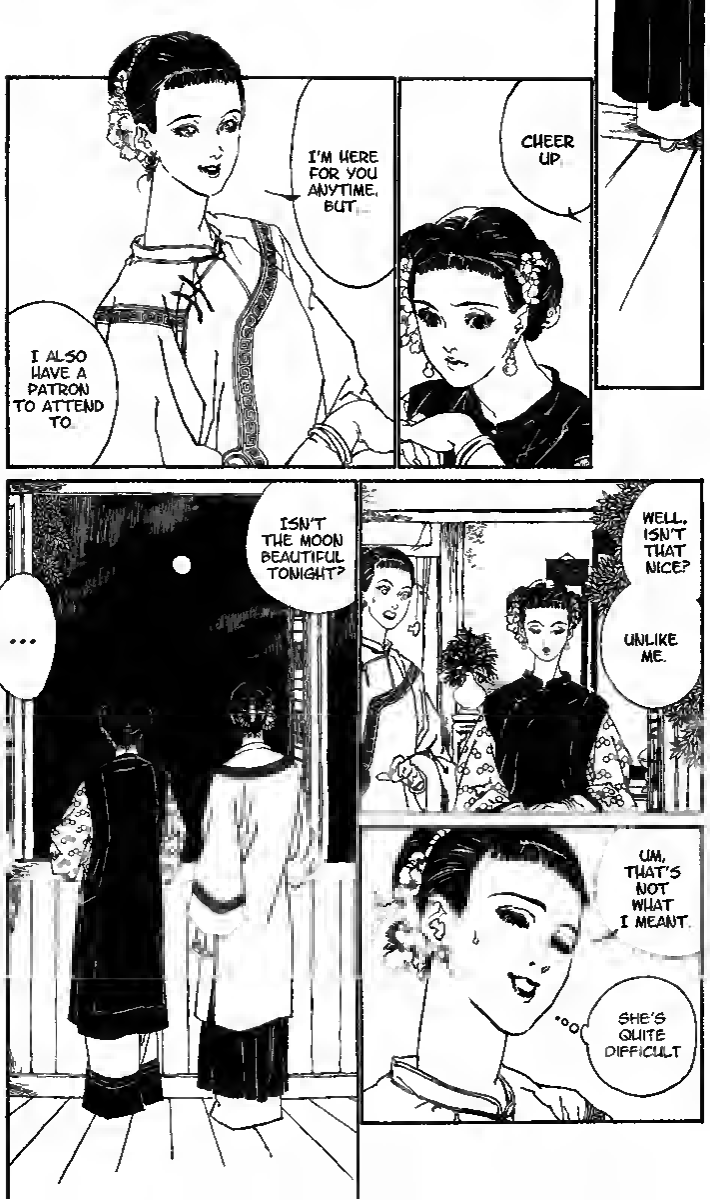
GOOD HEAVENS! I BOUGHT YOU AT A HIGH PRICE AND FOR NOTHING! YOU ATTRACT NO PATRONS!
YOU HAVEN'T EARNED A SINGLE TAEL. ALL THE MEN COME ONLY TO GAWK AT YOU!
YOU WHINE ABOUT THIS MAN BEING TOO UGLY, THAT MAN TOO OLD, AND YOU REMAIN QUIET ALL EVENING.
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?! ARE YOU TRYING TO STARVE ME TO DEATH?!
CALM DOWN, MADAM.

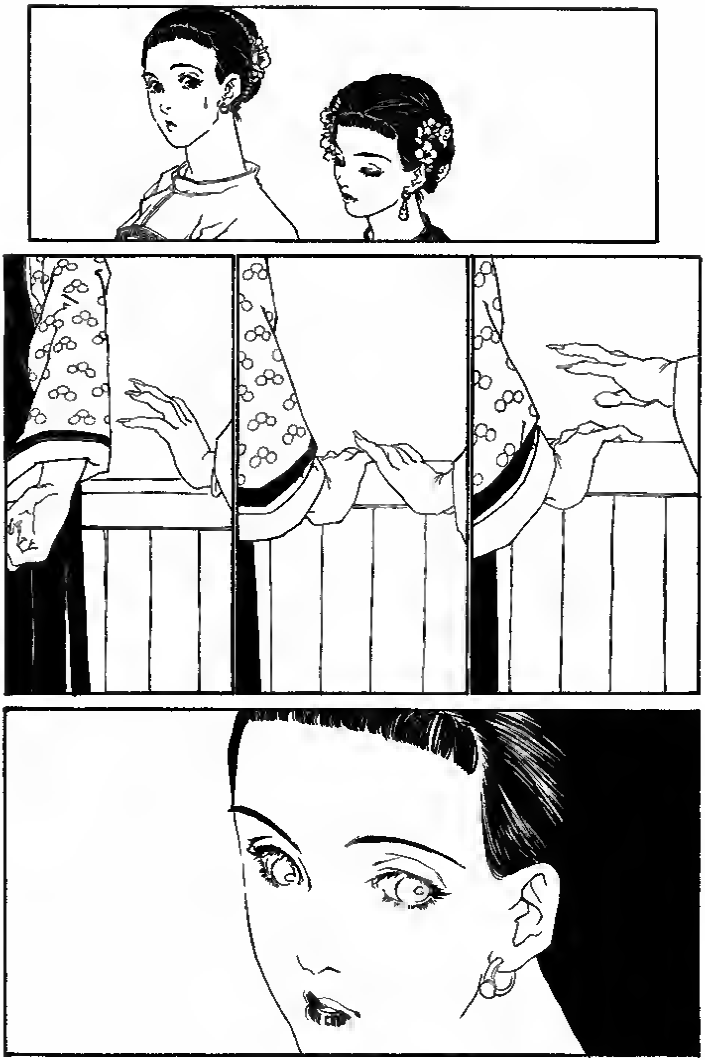
POOR THING
MADAM IS BEATING XUE YI AGAIN!
XUE XIANG
SERVES HER RIGHT!
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO ENTERTAIN MEN
FOR SOMEONE WITH SO LITTLE BEAUTY, THAT WENCH IS A SNOB
NO MAN WOULD TAKE PLEASURE IN SUCH A SILENT, GLOOMY WOMAN!

DON'T YOU FEEL SORRY FOR HER, YOUR SISTER?**
WHY DO YOU KEEP SAYING BAD THINGS ABOUT XUE YI?
THAT'S ENOUGH!
TING LANG JIE*
I DON'T CARE ABOUT HER!

*Equ valent to the Japanese ane-san

**Not s ster in the literal sense. The brothel is set up like a family where the prostitutes are all "sisters" with the madam as their mother"


I'M HERE FOR YOU ANYTIME, BUT...
I ALSO HAVE A PATRON TO ATTEND TO.
CHEER UP.
ISN'T THE MOON BEAUTIFUL TONIGHT?
...
WELL, ISN'T THAT NICE?
UNLIKE ME.
UM, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
SHE'S QUITE DIFFICULT

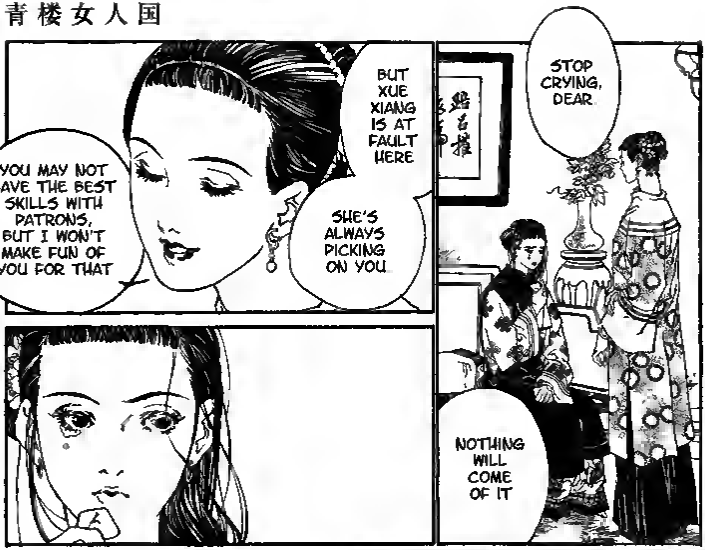


THAT'S WHY SHE DOESN'T ATTRACT PATRONS!
SHE DIDN'T EVEN RESPOND WHEN I TRIED SPEAKING TO HER
NOW, LI ZHI ER—
I PITY HER, TOO.
THEY SAY SHE COMES FROM A WEALTHY FAMILY.

OUCH!!
THIS WON'T KILL YOU!
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, YOU BITCH?
HOW NOISY
CAN YOU GO AND SEE WHAT IT'S ABOUT, LI ZHI ER?
LET GO OF ME!
BUT THEN SHE MET A NASTY MAN WHO DECEIVED HER AND SOLD HER OFF TO A BROTHEL
HEY!
WHAT'S GOING ON?
SINCE SHE'S UNPOPULAR WITH CUSTOMERS, SHE KEEPS GETTING PASSED AROUND, THE POOR THING
THAT MUST BE WHY SHE'S NOT USED TO PEOPLE BEING KIND TO HER
DON'T HIT ME!
DIE ALREADY!!
...
IT'S XUE YI STIRRING UP TROUBLE
SHE'S BEING ALL MELO-DRAMATIC
AND BASHING HER HEAD AGAINST THE WALL

FEH!
IF YOU REALLY WANT TO DIE, TRY SWALLOWING OPIUM OR GOLD!
WHAT?
WOULDN'T YOU PREFER ME DEAD ANYHOW?!
THEN AGAIN, YOU'D HAVE TO FIND SOME MAN...
THAT'S ONE CERTAIN WAY TO BOOK YOUR PASSAGE TO THE AFTERLIFE.
WILLING TO GIVE YOU GOLD.
WHAT'S ALL THIS RACKET?
JUST DIE!! GO TO HELL!

OGH!
NO, I DIDN'T! HE'S THE ONE WHO PULLED ON MY SLEEVES!
THE FOOLISH GIRL TRIED TO SEDUCE MY MAN!
DON'T BE SILLY!
HAVING YOUR PATRON FLIRT WITH ANOTHER GIRL IS NOTHING TO BE HUFFY ABOUT!
AFTER ALL, HE ISN'T YOUR ONLY PATRON


BUT XUE XIANG IS AT FAULT HERE
SHE'S ALWAYS PICKING ON YOU
YOU MAY NOT HAVE THE BEST SKILLS WITH PATRONS, BUT I WON'T MAKE FUN OF YOU FOR THAT
STOP CRYING, DEAR
NOTHING WILL COME OF IT

CHEER UP
I'M HERE FOR YOU
MM?
LET'S BE GOOD FRIENDS.

...
?
DIE YOU SAY YOU WANT TO BE MY FRIEND
BECAUSE YOU THINK YOU'RE SUPERIOR TO ME
I'D RATHER YOU ATTACK ME AS XUE XIANG DOES
WE CAN'T BE FRIENDS
EH?
DEEP DOWN, SHE'S AFRAID I MIGHT SURPASS HER IN THE ART OF PLEASING MEN

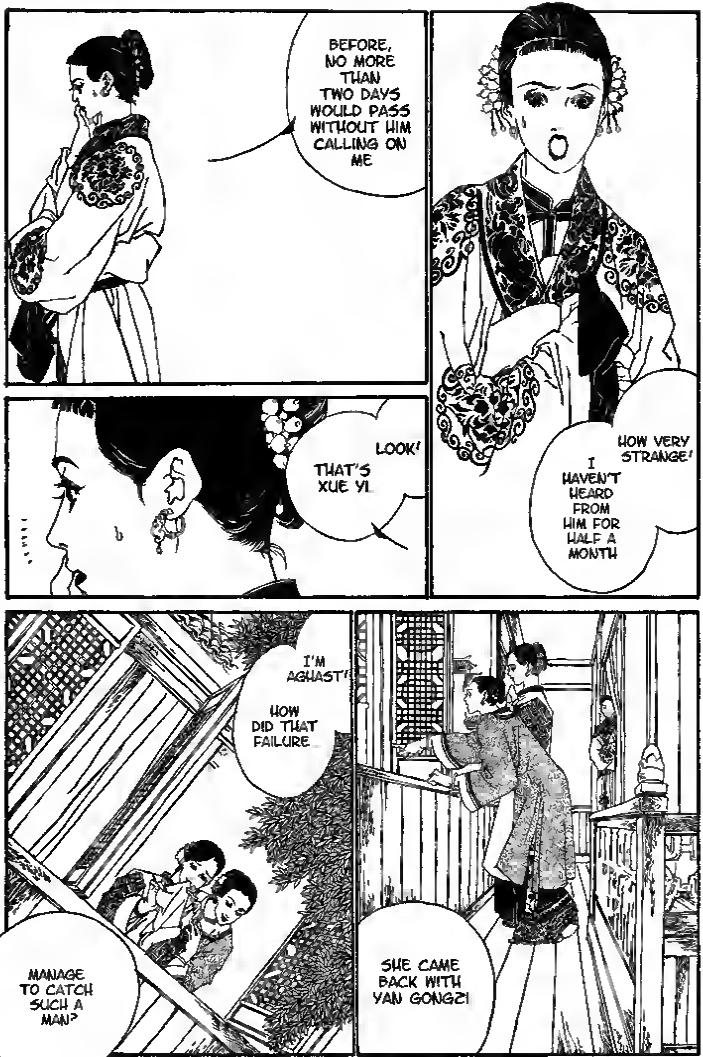
I GO OUT OF MY WAY TO TREAT HER KINDLY, TOO
I DON'T KNOW WHERE SHE GETS SUCH CYNICAL IDEAS
VERY SHOCKING, I TELL YOU!
TING LANG JIE,
YAO LAN SHENG GONG21* IS HERE.
HOW CAN I?
LEAVE HER BE
THAT PITIFUL CHILD
COMPARED TO HER, I AM BLESSED
I HAVE YOU AS MY INTIMATE PATRON

*An honorific for a distinguished young man

WELL, THAT XUE YI GIRL MIGHT BE MORE SELF-ASSURED IF SHE HAD A MAN FOR HERSELF
ALWAYS THE MEDDLER, AREN'T YOU?
THE MORE I THINK OF THAT, THE MORE I WANT TO HELP HER
I HAVE A FRIEND WHO LIKES SUCH PECULIAR GIRLS
THEN SHE MIGHT OPEN UP TO OTHERS AS WELL
OF MY WIFE-TO-BE
I'LL DO THIS FOR THE SISTER
I COULD EVEN BE THE MEDIATOR
WOULD YOU?
I'D BE SO GRATEFUL!

YOUR WIFE-TO-BE
南無阿彌陀佛
YOU MUST BE HUNGRY
WOULD YOU LIKE SOME DIM SUM?
NOT AT ALL
NAUGHTY!
I'D MUCH PREFER YOUR TWO DUMPLINGS

THE MONTH FLIES BY IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE.
TING LANG JIE SUDDENLY FINDS HERSELF FRETTING ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY,
NAMELY...
AS I SAID,
YAO GONGZI'S GATEKEEPERS TOLD ME...
HE WASN'T IN
CLATTER
YOU—DID YOU EVEN DELIVER MY MESSAGE?
I DID! I ASKED THEM TO PLEASE LET HIM KNOW THAT YOU WERE EXPECTING HIM.
JUST AS I DO EACH TIME YOU SEND ME THERE


BEFORE, NO MORE THAN TWO DAYS WOULD PASS WITHOUT HIM CALLING ON ME
HOW VERY STRANGE! I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HIM FOR HALF A MONTH
LOOK! THAT'S XUE YI
I'M AGHAST! HOW DID THAT FAILURE MANAGE TO CATCH SUCH A MAN?
SHE CAME BACK WITH YAN GONGZI

YOU DON'T KNOW? YAO JIEFU* INTRODUCED THEM
HE'S RICH AND HANDSOME,
NOT TO MENTION AN ELITE SCHOLAR!
WHERE DID SHE FIND HIM, I WONDER

*Literally: elder sister's husband

HE'S SO BESOTTED WITH A GIRL FROM ANOTHER HOUSE, THEY SAY HE'S ONLY A STEP AWAY FROM REDEEMING HER.
SPEAKING OF YAO SIEFU, I HEARD A MOST UNBELIEVABLE THING ABOUT HIM.

OH, MY! WHAT OF TING LANG SIE?!
ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?
HE'S WRITTEN HER OFF.
SHE WAS TOO BUSY WORRYING ABOUT XUE YI TO TAKE CARE OF HER OWN.
THAT'S NOT VERY NICE!
TEE HEE HEE.

TING LANG JIE!
JIE!
I'M SORRY ABOUT MY BEHAVIOR IN THE PAST...
I WAS REALLY VERY BITTER, WASN'T I?
LET'S BE GOOD FRIENDS...

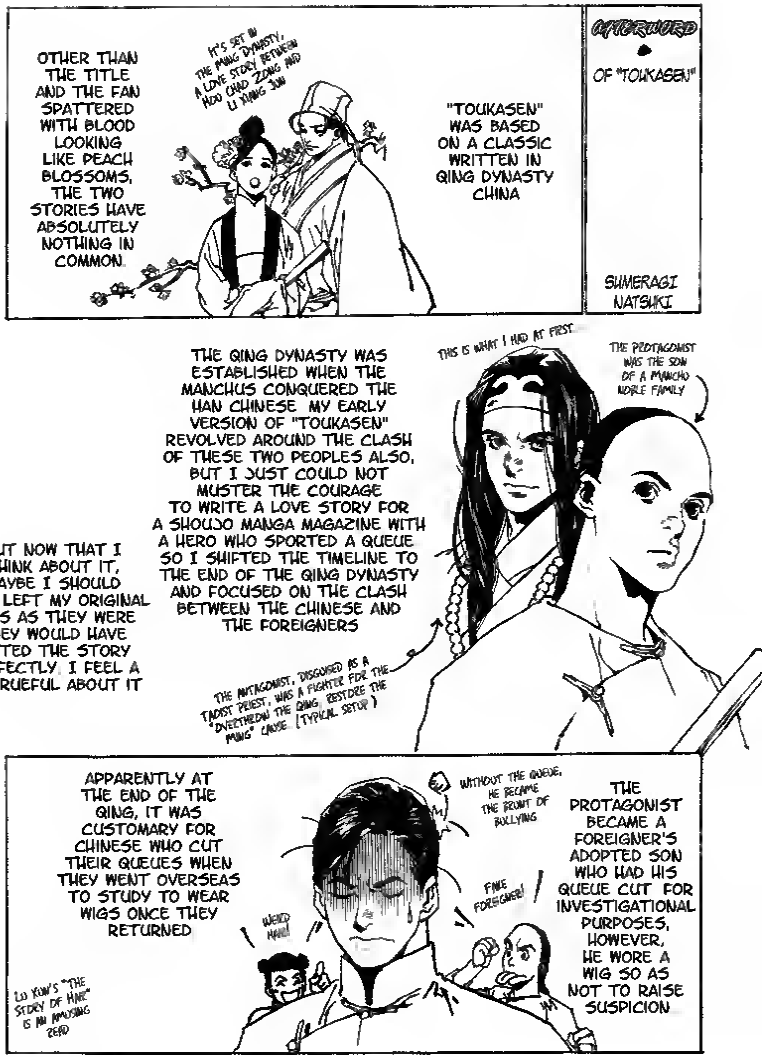
...SHALL WE?

IRRITATION, WHICH SHE NEVER BEFORE FELT TOWARD XUE YI, BUBBLES UP INSIDE HER

TING LANG MERELY GIVES A FAINT SMILE, WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A WORD.

End of "Seirou Nyonin-koku"

AFTERWORD OF "TOUKASEN"


OTHER THAN THE TITLE AND THE FAN SPATTERED WITH BLOOD LOOKING LIKE PEACH BLOSSOMS, THE TWO STORIES HAVE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING IN COMMON.
IT'S SET IN THE MING DYNASTY. A LOVE STORY BETWEEN KOU CHAO ZONG AND LI XIANG JUN
"TOUKASEN" WAS BASED ON A CLASSIC WRITTEN IN QING DYNASTY CHINA
SUMERAGI NATSUKI
THE QING DYNASTY WAS ESTABLISHED WHEN THE MANCHUS CONQUERED THE HAN CHINESE. MY EARLY VERSION OF "TOUKASEN" REVOLVED AROUND THE CLASH OF THESE TWO PEOPLES ALSO, BUT I JUST COULD NOT MUSTER THE COURAGE TO WRITE A LOVE STORY FOR A SHOUJO MANGA MAGAZINE WITH A HERO WHO SPORTED A QUEUE. SO I SHIFTED THE TIMELINE TO THE END OF THE QING DYNASTY AND FOCUSED ON THE CLASH BETWEEN THE CHINESE AND THE FOREIGNERS
THIS IS WHAT I HAD AT FIRST
THE PROTAGONIST WAS THE SON OF A MANCHU NOBLE FAMILY
BUT NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE LEFT MY ORIGINAL IDEAS AS THEY WERE. THEY WOULD HAVE FITTED THE STORY PERFECTLY. I FEEL A BIT RUEFUL ABOUT IT
THE PROTAGONIST, DISGUISED AS A TAOIST PRIEST, WAS A FIGHTER FOR THE "OVERTHROW THE QING, RESTORE THE MING" CAUSE (TYPICAL SETUP)
APPARENTLY AT THE END OF THE QING, IT WAS CUSTOMARY FOR CHINESE WHO CUT THEIR QUEUES WHEN THEY WENT OVERSEAS TO STUDY TO WEAR WIGS ONCE THEY RETURNED
WITHOUT THE QUEUE, HE BECAME THE FRONT OF RALLYING
FINE FOREIGNER!
WEIRD HAIR!
LU XUN'S "THE STORY OF HAIR" IS AN AMUSING READ
THE PROTAGONIST BECAME A FOREIGNER'S ADOPTED SON WHO HAD HIS QUEUE CUT FOR INVESTIGATIONAL PURPOSES. HOWEVER, HE WORE A WIG SO AS NOT TO RAISE SUSPICION

End of Afterword

Yama ni Sumu Kami

by Sumeragi Natsuki

Happy Birthday, Renpii-cat!